

Adult

Sabbath School Lessons

The Letter to the Romans

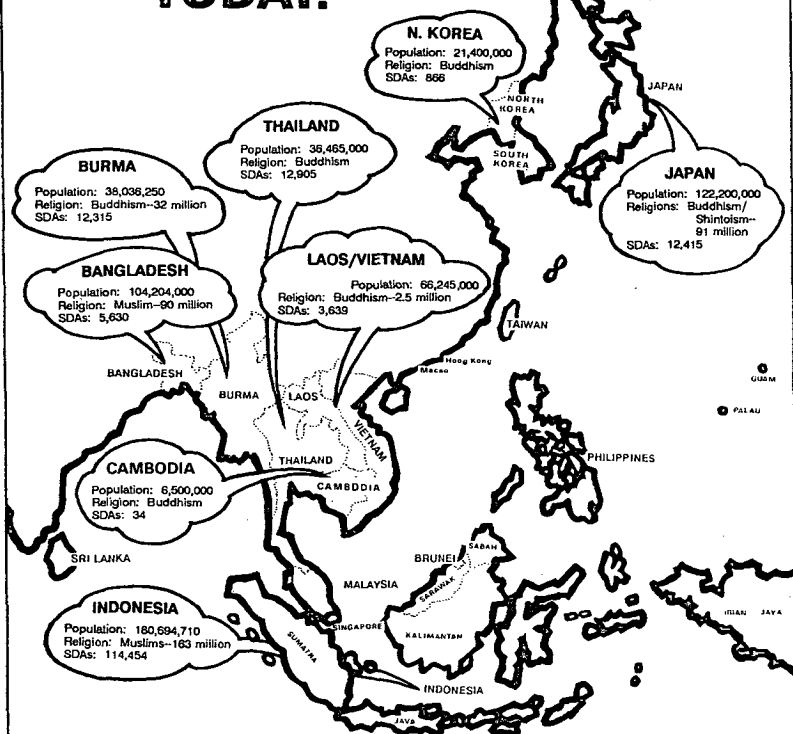


October, November, December 1990

THE CHALLENGE IS GREAT !!!

LOOK AT
THE PICTURE
AS IT STANDS
TODAY.

THE
FAR EAST
NEEDS
\$500,000
FOR GLOBAL
STRATEGY
PROJECTS



WE PLAN TO REACH THE UNREACHED.
WE ARE SERIOUS! WILL YOU HELP US MEET THE
CHALLENGE ON DECEMBER 29, 1990?

The CHALLENGE of the UNREACHED

DID YOU KNOW THAT THERE ARE IN THE FAR EAST

521 million unreached people

THAT HAVE NOT HEARD THE GOSPEL!



WHAT ARE OUR OPTIONS?



* NEW WORK TASK FORCE - INDONESIA

"Hi, my name is Dorthea Yacobus. I was enrolled in a university, and was engaged to be married; but the Lord so strongly impressed me of the importance of the New Work Task Force that I spent a year working in an unentered area. Many Muslims have been baptized as the result of our simple approach of teaching health, gardening, and nutrition."--Dorthea Yacobus, Volunteer Worker.

* AGRICULTURAL APPROACH TO MUSLIMS - BANGLADESH



"One of the ways we have been able to help Muslim countries is through practical agricultural concepts. There are 90 million Muslims in Bangladesh that have never heard about Jesus. Through this Global Strategy project, we will be able to open sixteen new areas."--S K Das, (from Bangladesh) Global Strategy Analyst, Far Eastern Division.

* AN APPROACH TO ALL OF KOREA

"My name is T. S. Shim. I was born in North Korea. For many years, we have not been able to work in my country. The people there do not know about the God we serve. Now the situation may be changing. Indications are that doors may be opening soon.

--T S Shim (from Korea) Asso. Church Ministries Director, Far Eastern Division.



* WE WANT TO MEET THE CHALLENGE



"The Far Eastern Division has one giant task, considering that there are 270 million Muslims and 251 million Buddhists in our territory. Most of these people have never read the Bible nor heard of salvation through Christ. We have carefully prepared strategic plans to open work in these unentered areas. Frankly, we are excited about what will happen with your support of World Missions and Global Strategy in the Far East. Thank you for your help."--O C Edwards, President, Far Eastern Division.



**REACHING THE UNREACHED
THROUGH 13TH SABBATH OFFERING
AND GLOBAL STRATEGY**



Meet the Principal Contributor to This Quarter's Lessons



Dr. Herbert Kiesler is an associate director in the Biblical Research Institute of the General Conference.

Born in Dortmund, Germany, Dr. Kiesler studied at Seminar Marienhoehe and interned in Germany before moving to Andrews University, where he received his Bachelor of Arts, Master of Arts, and Bachelor of Divinity degrees. He holds a Ph.D. from McGill University in Montreal, Canada. He pastored in Michigan and in the Ontario-Quebec Conference. He served as chairman of the Bible department at Canadian Union College before joining the General Conference staff. He is fluent in six languages: English, French, German, Swedish, Greek, and Hebrew.

As a member of the Biblical Research Institute, Dr. Kiesler leads out in Bible conferences in the Southern Asia and Far Eastern divisions, and has written numerous papers in conjunction with these conferences. He is the author of the companion book for this quarter's lessons.

Dr. Kiesler sings and plays the violin, enjoys oil painting and woodworking. He and his wife, Minodora, have one young daughter.

Check with your local Adventist Book Center for the companion volume to these lessons.

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1. The Righteousness of God Is Power
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13. Work, Give, Pray, Believe

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Bible Versions Table

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Introduction to the Book of Romans

The Author. Paul is the author of the Epistle to the Romans. Although he was a Roman citizen, Paul was a Jew of the tribe of Benjamin (Phil. 3:5; Rom. 11:1). As a typical Jewish boy, brought up in Tarsus, the capital of Cilicia, he learned the trade of tentmaking (Acts 18:1-3). In his youth his devout parents sent him to Jerusalem (Acts 26:4). There he studied under the renowned Jewish scholar Gamaliel (Acts 22:3). Thus Paul became a Pharisee (Acts 26:5), devoted to the strict observance of the law as a means of salvation. He probably spoke three languages, Hebrew, Aramaic, and Greek (Acts 21:37, 40; 22:2) and possibly also Latin.

As an arch-persecutor of the Christian community, Paul was part of the group who stoned Stephen (Acts 26:10, 11; 7:58).

Arrested by Christ. On the road to Damascus Paul received a vision of the risen Christ (Acts 9; 26). This experience changed his life (Acts 26:12-19).

To Jerusalem, Tarsus, and Antioch. After a period in Arabia Paul returned to Jerusalem (Gal. 1:17, 18; Acts 9:26-30; 22:17-21). In response to the Lord's instruction, he went to Tarsus where he spent a number of years before Barnabas invited him to work in Syrian Antioch (Acts 11:25, 26). Shortly after that Paul began his missionary journeys during which he took the gospel around the Mediterranean world.

The Epistle to the Romans. Paul spent the last three months of his third missionary journey at Corinth, probably in A.D. 58. While there he wrote both his epistles to the Galatians and Romans. (*The Acts of the Apostles*, pp. 373, 383.)

Why did Paul write the epistle to the Romans? Evidently he wrote to prepare the church of Rome for his first visit there (Rom. 1:10-13). Possibly he was also endeavoring to meet certain specific situations in the church (Rom. 16:17-20). But by far the most important reason was that he saw how necessary it was to establish the Roman Christians in the faith by presenting to them a systematic discussion of the gospel.

"In his epistle to the Romans, Paul set forth the great principles of the gospel. He stated his position on the questions which were agitating the Jewish and the Gentile churches, and showed that the hopes and promises which had once belonged especially to the Jews were now offered to the Gentiles also."—*The Acts of the Apostles*, p. 373.

The theme of the epistle to the Romans is that salvation from sin is only by Christ's grace for those who have faith. Human effort does not earn salvation or make the sinner holy. Conformity to God's law results from salvation by faith.

OVERVIEW OF THE EPISTLE TO THE ROMANS

I. Introduction 1:1-17
III. Justification by Faith
3:21—8:39
V. Spiritual Counsel
12:1—15:13

II. All in Need of Salvation 1:18—3:20
IV. God's Plan for Jew and Gentile
9:1—11:36
VI. Conclusion 15:14—16:27

The Righteousness of God Is Power

THIS WEEK'S STUDY: Romans 1: 1-17.

SAB **PM** **MEMORY TEXT:** "For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ: for it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth; to the Jew first, and also to the Greek" (Romans 1:16).

SALVATION FREELY OFFERED TO ALL. God's righteousness, freely available to all, is His gracious gift of eternal salvation to all who will accept it.

OUTLINE:

- I. Paul, the Apostle (Rom. 1:1, 2).
- II. The Humanity and Deity of Christ (Rom. 1:3-6).
- III. Address to the Romans (Rom. 1:7).
- IV. The Apostle's Gratitude (Rom. 1:8-10).
- V. Under Obligation (Rom. 1:11-15).
- VI. Unashamed of the Gospel (Rom. 1:16, 17).

THE POWER OF CHRIST. There is infinite power in the gospel, power to save repenting sinners, however serious their sins may have been! This power results from the influence that the transforming righteousness of Jesus has upon the believer. Righteousness is not an intangible quality. It is Christ's bestowal of Himself upon the repenting, believing sinner. "Therefore the Christ who is grasped by faith and who lives in the heart is the true Christian righteousness, on account of which God counts us righteous and grants us eternal life."—*Luther's Works* (Saint Louis, Missouri: Concordia, 1963), vol. 26, p. 130. This is what the book of Romans is all about. It presents divine, saving truth, because it presents the Christ who alone is able to save.

In this week's lesson the gospel, God's good news to all people, is the focal point of our interest, for His gift "is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth" (Rom. 1:16).

I. PAUL, THE APOSTLE (Rom. 1:1, 2).

1. What is the significance of Paul's claim regarding himself in Romans 1:1, 2? 2 Cor. 12:1-7, 11, 12 (see also 1 Cor. 9:1, 2).

[Note: Throughout this quarterly the Bible passage following each question is intended to provide the answer. The additional references in parenthesis provide related thoughts for those who enjoy further study.]

Paul did not write on his own authority. He was a servant of Christ and a divinely appointed apostle. On occasions Paul vigorously defended his apostleship. Apostolic teaching, preaching, and writing were invested with the special authority of Christ and the Holy Spirit. The New Testament identifies an apostle as one who had a special revelation from Christ, whether by virtue of associating with Him when He was on earth or by receiving direct communications from Him after His resurrection. (See Acts 1:2-8, 15-26.)

Set apart for the gospel. Paul was set apart for the gospel. He had been a Pharisee (Phil. 3:5), supposing himself to be set apart from other men for the service of God. Now he was truly separated, not in the sense of being exalted above others, but in the sense of having been delivered from a life of sin and consecrated for a life of service and witnessing.

In what sense are you “set apart for the gospel of God” (Rom. 1:1, RSV)? What is the difference between your authority and the authority and role of the apostle Paul?

SUN II. THE HUMANITY AND DEITY OF CHRIST (Rom. 1:3-6).

2. What does Paul teach us about the humanity of Jesus Christ? Rom. 1:3 (compare Gal. 4:4; John 7:42).

The humanity of Christ. Paul refers to the humanity of Jesus Christ by using a phrase which occurs in his writings frequently, “according to the flesh.” The flesh here denotes humanity. As a human being Jesus was a descendant of David. (See Matt. 1:1; Acts 2:30; Rev. 5:5.)

3. What did Paul teach regarding the deity of Jesus Christ? Rom. 1:4 (compare Col. 2:9).

Jesus, who was a descendant of David, was Deity. This is the consistent testimony of the Bible. (Compare Micah 5:2; John 5:18; 8:58.)

“And yet the Creator of worlds, He in whom was the fullness of the Godhead bodily, was manifest in the helpless babe in the manger. Far higher than any of the angels, equal with the Father in dignity and glory, and yet wearing the garb of humanity! Divinity and humanity were mysteriously combined, and man and God became one.”—Ellen G. White Comments, *SDA Bible Commentary*, vol. 5, p. 1130.

4. What is the source of power “for obedience to the faith”? Rom.

1:5 (compare Rom. 15:15, 16; 1 Cor. 1:4-7).

Paul not only received grace for his apostolic ministry, but also received grace to obey Christ's will. He constantly upheld the grace of Christ as the power for victorious Christian living.

Grace is spiritually enriching power. The word *grace* occurs approximately 156 times in the New Testament. It refers to God's infinite love and all that His love has led Him to do for man's salvation (Titus 2:11; Eph. 1:7). Paul, the legalist persecutor, had received God's grace, His forgiveness, His power to overcome sin, and His wisdom and efficiency as a soul-winner. (See 2 Cor. 9:8, 14.)

How do you daily receive the grace of Christ for "obedience to the faith"? How do you "grow in grace" (2 Peter 3:18)?

MON

III. ADDRESS TO THE ROMANS (Rom. 1:7).

5. Why does the apostle address the believers at Rome as "saints"? What is your concept of a saint? Rom. 1:7 (compare Acts 9:32, 41; 1 Cor. 1:2).

The term *saints* is translated from the Greek word that means "holy ones." In the New Testament, Christians quite commonly are referred to as saints. (See also Acts 26:10; Eph. 1:1.) The term does not refer to people who are already perfect in holiness. Paul referred to the divided members of the Corinthian church as saints. They had been "sanctified" (1 Cor. 1:2) or "made holy" by receiving the free gift of the holiness or righteousness of Christ. But they were spoiling the gift bestowed upon them by their arguments and controversies. Saints are those who have fully accepted Jesus Christ as their Saviour, and are allowing the Holy Spirit to sanctify them daily. While remaining in a world of sin, they have chosen to live apart from sin and have accepted God's offer of healing from the damage of sin. (See 1 Cor. 6:11.)

Why is it important to regard yourself as one of God's saints, even though you are aware of your human weaknesses?

IV. THE APOSTLE'S GRATITUDE (Rom. 1:8-10).

6. How is Paul's expression of gratitude for the faith of the Christians at Rome related to his prayer request? Rom. 1:8-10.

Paul expresses gratitude for the Christian faith possessed by the believers in Rome. What a lesson in human relations! While some individuals never fail to criticize others, focusing on their faults and weaknesses, Paul

expresses confidence and appreciation. He tried to discover the virtues of his fellow believers. Positive reinforcement is not flattery. Every human being needs acceptance and honest commendation. Struggling souls are often encouraged to carry on when someone speaks an appreciative word. Paul praised the Lord for the faithfulness of the Roman Christians and prayed that they would continue to be built up in the faith.

How have words of appreciation contributed to the happiness of your family and the unity and love displayed in your church?

TUE

V. UNDER OBLIGATION (Rom. 1:11-15).

7. Why was the apostle so anxious to see his friends? Rom. 1:11-13.

The word *let* as it is used in Romans 1:13 means "hindered, prevented." Circumstances had combined to prevent Paul from visiting Rome.

8. What does the apostle mean when he says, "I am debtor" or "I am under obligation" (RSV)? Rom. 1:14. How does the apostle emphasize his willingness to preach the gospel at Rome? Rom. 1:15.

Paul felt that he had an obligation both to Greeks and Barbarians (that is, those not of Greek culture). His sense of debt to others was not only because God had laid upon him a duty toward them, but because he felt the deepest gratitude for what the Lord had done for him. Paul could say with the psalmist, "What shall I render unto the Lord for all his benefits toward me?" (Psalm 116:12). Because of Calvary, Paul was in debt to all humanity.

Love like Christ's. "In him who is fully in sympathy with Christ there can be nothing selfish or exclusive. He who drinks of the living water will find that it is 'in him a well of water springing up into everlasting life.' The Spirit of Christ within him is like a spring welling up in the desert, flowing to refresh all, and making those who are ready to perish, eager to drink of the water of life."—*Testimonies*, vol. 5, p. 731.

Do you acknowledge your responsibility to others? Can you offer some suggestions as to how you can meet the obligation to others that Christ has laid upon you?

VI. UNASHAMED OF THE GOSPEL (Rom. 1:16, 17).

Romans 1:16, 17 present the theme of the epistle to the Romans: salvation is the reception of the righteousness of God by faith in Jesus Christ.

9. What was the gospel of which Paul was unashamed (Rom. 1:16)?

1 Cor. 15:1-4 _____

Gal. 2:2, 16 _____

The word *gospel* is a translation of the Greek word that means “good news.” What exciting good news the gospel provides! The heart of the gospel is the fact that Christ died for our sins and rose again to be our living Saviour. But these historical facts benefit the sinner only when he or she has faith in Jesus. It is not enough to believe about Jesus in the same way you believe about other historical figures. You have faith when you can honestly say with Paul, “I count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord” (Phil. 3:8). Then He provides healing from sin, and you enjoy the blessings of salvation.



10. What does Paul mean by “salvation” (Rom. 1:16)? Rom. 10:6-10.

The Greek word translated *salvation* means “deliverance,” or “preservation.” Later in his epistle to the Romans Paul identifies salvation with righteousness by faith (Rom. 10:6-10). Salvation is deliverance from evil by the inner working of the Holy Spirit (Eph. 1:13; Phil. 2:12, 13). It also involves final deliverance from this present world of sin at the second advent of Jesus (Rom. 13:11; 1 Thess. 5:8-10).

Scripture states that salvation is (a) of God (Ps. 37:39); (b) by and through Christ (Acts 4:12); (c) and not by human works (Eph. 2:8, 9).

Salvation has three aspects: past, present, and future. Believers already have been redeemed from the guilt and penalty of sin. They now are being delivered from its power. At last they will be delivered from its presence.

11. How is God’s righteousness “revealed” in the gospel (Rom. 1:17)? 1 Cor. 2:9-16 (compare Matt. 11:25-27).

The righteousness of God bestowed. Righteousness is purity or holiness of heart because of Christ’s indwelling (Rom. 8:9, 10). This righteousness of heart results in right doing (1 John 2:29). (See also *Thoughts From the Mount of Blessing*, p. 18.)

Romans 1:16, 17 says that the gospel has power to save us because it reveals to us God’s righteousness. The Greek verb *to reveal* means “to show, disclose, bring to light, uncover.” A number of times in the New Testament this verb refers to the light of truth, the knowledge of God revealed to minds and hearts by the Holy Spirit. Such revealed divine knowledge is not mere factual information; it is a spiritual experience by which truth becomes part of a life; it is a bestowal of spiritual power which the believer experiences. *The gospel is the power of God to the believer because he or she experiences the righteousness of God.* Believers not only know that God is righteous; but also take into

their lives the transforming power of God's righteousness.

When Paul wrote that the gospel is power for the believer because in it is "the righteousness of God revealed," he meant that God's righteousness is bestowed upon you when you accept Christ. This happens in two ways: (a) Christ's righteousness is placed to the believer's account; (b) Christ's righteousness is taken into the heart of the believer by the Holy Spirit.

Christ not only asks you to admire His personal righteousness, but also invites you to take it into your heart. The divine revelation of righteousness to the heart of the believer is the power that transforms a habitual sinner to a habitual servant of Christ. The indwelling power of Christ in the trusting believer accomplishes right being and right doing. This is the power that qualifies a person for heaven. (See Matt. 25:46.)

His righteousness becomes ours. "Genuine faith appropriates the righteousness of Christ, and the sinner is made an overcomer with Christ; for he is made a partaker of the divine nature, and thus divinity and humanity are combined."—*Selected Messages*, book 1, pp. 363, 364.

"In order to meet the requirements of the law, our faith must grasp the righteousness of Christ, accepting it as our righteousness. Through union with Christ, through acceptance of His righteousness by faith, we may be qualified to work the works of God, to be colaborers with Christ."—*Selected Messages*, book 1, p. 374.



12. Why does Paul stress so strongly the importance of faith (Rom. 1:16, 17)? Rom. 10:9 (compare Eph. 2:8-10).

God's offer of salvation is universal. Christ had revealed to Paul the simple truth that the best of human works cannot earn eternal life, because all have broken God's law in the past. Christ died for our sins and offers us salvation as a free gift if only we will believe. Belief is more than mental assent, or acceptance of a set of facts. It is reaching out in gratitude and taking into the heart the saving presence of the Saviour Himself.

Believe and the gift is yours. "You have confessed your sins, and in heart put them away. You have resolved to give yourself to God. Now go to Him and ask that He will wash away your sins and give you a new heart. Then believe that He does this *because He has promised*. This is the lesson which Jesus taught while He was on earth, that the gift which God promises us, we must believe we do receive, and it is ours."—*Steps to Christ*, pp. 49, 50.

13. When the believer receives Christ's righteousness does he become a righteous person (Rom. 1:17)? Rom. 6:18 (compare 1 John 2:29; 3:7).

The Greek of Romans 1:17 (last phrase) translates literally: "The righteous person shall live by faith." The RSV translates it: "He who through

faith is righteous shall live." Because Christ is living in the believer's heart, he or she has the gift of Christ's righteousness. Thus the believer has the power to do works that are acceptable to God. Such righteous works were possible to Paul because he could say, "I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me" (Gal. 2:20). Never is the Christian righteous independently of Christ's indwelling. Christ is righteous, and He comes to live in our hearts. In this sense we have righteousness. It is always His, but it is also ours because we believe in Him and He has become ours.

HOW DOES THIS LESSON APPLY TO ME? Complete the following sentences:

- I have experienced the gospel as the power of God in the following ways: _____

- When each church member receives the gift of the righteousness of Christ, we will see these results: _____

(FR)

FURTHER STUDY AND MEDITATION: Read Ellen G. White, "Salvation to the Jews," *The Acts of the Apostles*, pp. 372-382 and "The Sinner's Need of Christ," *Steps to Christ*, pp. 17-22.

SUMMARY: Paul's passion is the desire to preach God's power to save everyone who believes. In the gospel is revealed the righteousness of God that transforms the person who has faith.

HOW'S YOUR MISSION VISION?

Celebrating 100
Years



Look for Details
in Sabbath School
October 20

Year Of Adventist World Mission

The Guilty May Know Him

THIS WEEK'S STUDY: Romans 1:18—2:29.



MEMORY TEXT: "For the invisible things of him from the creation of the world are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even his eternal power and Godhead; so that they are without excuse" (Romans 1:20).

ALL OF US ARE SINNERS IN NEED OF A SAVIOUR. Whatever our nationality, race, social standing, or level of education we are in need of a Saviour.

OUTLINE:

- I. God Revealed to Corrupt Humanity (Rom. 1:18-23).
- II. God's Inevitable Judgment (Rom. 1:24-32).
- III. Do Not Judge Others (Rom. 2:1-4).
- IV. God's Principles of Judgment (Rom. 2:5-11).
- V. Judgment Through Christ (Rom. 2:12-29).

THE FIRST POINT IN PAUL'S TREATISE. After presenting the theme of his epistle in Romans 1:16, 17, Paul develops his first major point: Apart from Christ, no human being can claim freedom from guilt. The saving work of Christ is essential for all, irrespective of culture and religious affiliation. All humanity is guilty before God, the Gentile as well as the Jew. Their sinful deeds will result in the manifestation of God's displeasure. Since many have shown greater devotion to the creature than to the Creator, God has given them over to the passions of their own fallen natures. Paul warns them, however, not to excuse their sins by judging the sins of others. Even the self-righteous moralist will be judged by Jesus Christ in the last judgment.

I. GOD REVEALED TO CORRUPT HUMANITY (Rom. 1:18-23).

1. What reason is given for the revelation of God's wrath? Why is truth objectionable to many human beings? Romans 1:18.

Human self-centeredness. "When Copernicus, the Polish astronomer, started to study the heavens, he gradually came to the conclusion that the earth was not the static center around which the universe revolved but,

rather, was a moving planet which itself revolved around the sun. He was, however, strangely reluctant to publish his findings, no doubt because he knew what a battle he would have trying to convince his contemporaries that man and his world are not the center of all existence. Man has always felt that he is the center and everything revolves around him. To be told otherwise, whether by an astronomer or a theologian, has always presented man with extreme problems. To insist that the core of truth is in 'Him' rather than 'us' and that we find our significance revolving around Him rather than the converse, poses a problem similar to that of Copernicus, because man, frankly, doesn't want to know this kind of thing. This is part of the truth that he suppresses."—D. Stuart Briscoe, *The Communicator's Commentary: Romans* (Waco, Texas: Word Books, 1982), p. 41.



- 2. How can God be a God of love as well as a God of wrath? Rom. 1:18; 1 John 4:8.**
-

God's love and His displeasure with sin are both aspects of His merciful concern to save humanity and restore the universe to a perfect state of purity and harmony. God's infinite love rejects sin and reacts negatively to it.

"God's love has been expressed in His justice no less than in His mercy. Justice is the foundation of His throne, and the fruit of His love."—*The Desire of Ages*, p. 762.

- 3. Why can there be no excuse for those who argue that God is unjust to condemn them because they have not had an opportunity to know Him? Rom. 1:18-20.**
-

How God reveals Himself. Paul contends that no one can plead ignorance of God, for He has provided sufficient evidence concerning His existence. He reveals Himself to humanity in three ways: (a) by speaking to the conscience of every individual (Rom. 2:15; compare John 1:9); (2) through the works of creation (Rom. 1:20); and (3) through the scriptures which present the Person and work of Christ (John 5:39).

- 4. What two sins do the ungodly foster in their hearts and what are the consequences? Rom. 1:21-23.**
-

God has dealt with the sin problem through Jesus Christ. Christ died for the sins of all mankind (1 John 2:2). But His wrath will fall upon the ungodly because they are unwilling to acknowledge Him as their Creator.

How would you approach a person who claims that he does not believe in God because there is insufficient evidence of His existence?

MON

II. GOD'S INEVITABLE JUDGMENT (Rom. 1:24-32).

5. Why does God forsake the ungodly? Rom. 1:24, 25 (compare Gen. 6:1-8; Matt. 24:37-42).

Paul explains the progressive spiritual, moral, and physical perversion of humanity. First, people substitute a lie for the truth about God. What is the lie? That created things and beings can be honored and worshiped because they possess divine attributes. Is such idolatry existent today? There are millions who believe that mankind is god, that the only deity is within the nature of humanity. Hence, they argue that the amazing feats we can achieve are not dependent upon the Christian God, but upon a simple recognition and development of our hidden natural abilities.

Second, having cut themselves off from the saving power of God, people glorify their emotional and physical impulses. They become victims of their passions ("the lusts of their hearts," Rom. 1:24, RSV) and the result is unrestrained sexual and ethical perversion.

6. What light does the phrase "God gave them up" shed on God's attitude toward the ungodly before they were set in their sinful practices? Rom. 1:26 (compare Isa. 1:18-20).

7. Note the long list of terrible sins committed by those who have chosen to reject God. Rom. 1:26-31 (compare Gal. 5:19-21; 2 Tim. 3:2-5). What knowledge do these sinners have according to Rom. 1:32? What double sin do they commit?

Can anyone deny the relevance of Paul's description to the world of today? It should be clear to anyone aware of current events that the terrible results of homosexuality and other sexual perversions are rampant disease, emotional disorders, broken lives, and premature death. The simple truth is constantly dramatized that without God human nature degenerates into moral chaos.

What are you, your family, and your church doing to resist the trend?

TUE

III. DO NOT JUDGE OTHERS (Rom. 2:1-4).

In Romans 2:1-27, Paul no longer addresses the heathen, but the Jews. Up to this point they were in full agreement with the apostle that the heathen were under the condemnation of God. But it never dawned on them that they could possibly be under condemnation as well. How could that be? The Jews had no question in their minds that they were in an especially privileged position with God.

8. How serious is it in God's sight to condemn others, especially when we practice the same things? Rom. 2:2, 3 (compare Matt. 7:1-5; Rom. 14:10).
-

Hypocrisy in human relations. Hypocrisy appears to be one of the most difficult subjects to address. How should we relate to people who seem to feel spiritually and morally superior to others? Should we confront them, by telling them how we feel about their self-righteous attitude? Paul certainly did not use this approach. He was concerned, however, to get one point across. Often we are guilty of the very sins we are so quick to see in the lives of those around us.

There are classic examples in Scripture of the very point Paul makes. One such example is the hypocrisy of those who accused the woman taken in adultery. These would-be guardians of justice, so quick to condemn the fallen woman, had led her into sin so that they could lay a snare for Jesus. (See *The Desire of Ages*, p. 460, 461.)

9. How may we experience spiritual renewal? Rom. 2:4 (compare 2 Tim. 2:25; Acts 5:31).
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The word *repentance* refers to a change of mind and purpose in life. It involves both sorrow for sin and turning away from it. Luther said, "To do so no more is the truest repentance." The word may best be interpreted in the sense of spiritual and moral conversion. Only God's kindness can lead to repentance. Imposed requirements and fear of punishment do not produce true repentance.

Repentance is a gift from Christ. "In Christ we behold the character of the Father, and see the pitying tenderness which God exercised for fallen man, giving his only begotten Son as a ransom for the transgressors of the law. It is in beholding the love of God that repentance is awakened in the sinner's heart, and an earnest desire is created to become reconciled to God."—*Review and Herald*, March 9, 1897.

"The Bible does not teach that the sinner must repent before he can heed the invitation of Christ. . . . It is the virtue that goes forth from Christ, that leads to genuine repentance."—*Steps to Christ*, p. 26.

How would you suggest that Christians today can overcome the tendency to feel that they are superior to some other people and, therefore, in a position to pass judgment?



IV. GOD'S PRINCIPLES OF JUDGMENT (Rom. 2:5-11).

10. Compare Romans 2:6-10 with Ephesians 2:8, 9. Do you think Paul contradicts himself? Explain.
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Many passages of Scripture teach that God judges us by our works. (See Ps. 62:12; Matt. 16:27; 1 Peter 1:17; Rev. 20:12; 22:12.) Salvation is by God's grace alone. A person saved by grace has the power to perform works acceptable to God. Christ works in and through us. (See Phil. 2:13; Gal. 2:20.) He then rewards us for the works that He has performed through us. Works that are right in God's sight provide evidence that His grace is present in the life. (See James 2:18.)

11. What did Paul want his readers to understand about the character of God? Rom. 2:11 (compare Eph. 6:8, 9).

How would you use Paul's message (Rom. 2:5-11) to answer those who insist that they are saved by Christ's grace irrespective of the sins in their lives?

V. JUDGMENT THROUGH CHRIST (Rom. 2:12-29).

12. Point out the criterion by which God will ultimately justify a person. What role does the apostle attribute to the law in passing judgment on sin? Rom. 2:12, 13.

Paul is not saying in Romans 2:13 that a person is justified because he or she obeys God's law. Obedience to the faith is by grace (Rom. 1:5). God's grace engenders our faith response, and the result is obedience to His law (Rom. 3:31; 8:3, 4). Romans 2:13 teaches that in the judgment God will demonstrate and pronounce that those whose works have given evidence that they were saved by grace are eternally righteous. The justification of verse 13 is "in the day when God shall judge the secrets of men by Jesus Christ" (verse 16).

Without and under the law. When Paul used the phrases "without the law" and "under the law" he pointed out the basic distinction between Jews and Gentiles. The Gentiles were without the law. He refers to those who did not have a revealed or written law. The Jews on the other hand were in possession of God's revealed will. In light of the context it appears that the apostle has the law of Ten Commandments in mind. It is also possible that he made reference to the Old Testament, which at the time of Paul's writing was known as the law. It is important to note that in verse 13, for the first time, the words *just* and *justified* appear in the epistle.

Paul's message in Romans 2:11-16 is that even those who have not had the Bible or heard of Christ are saved by His grace when they respond to the inner conviction of the Holy Spirit and obey His commands. (See *Education*, p. 29; *Christ's Object Lessons*, p. 385; *The Desire of Ages*, p. 638.)

13. How does the apostle characterize the Jews of his day? Rom. 2:17-24. Compare this description with that in verses 28 and 29.



14. According to Romans 2:25-29 what was the meaning of circumcision within the context of the covenant relationship? What difference do you see between the circumcision of the flesh and the circumcision of the heart? Gen. 17:9-14 (compare Deut. 10:16; 30:6; Jer. 4:4).

The real meaning of circumcision. The Jews insisted on the rite of circumcision. Their rabbis taught that the circumcised have a part in the world to come. Paul said in effect, No! If you rigidly insist on circumcision and then disregard the covenant, you are not any different from the uncircumcised who make no profession of knowing God.

Paul's inspired view was that the uncircumcised are also God's children if they have a heart relationship with Jesus Christ.

Sacraments and ceremonies have value when the Lord commands them, but they are only signs, symbols, and aids to faith. Never are they to take the place of a heart union with God.

Spirit versus letter. By "the letter" in Romans 2:29 Paul does not mean the Ten Commandments. The Greek word for *letter* in the writings of Paul sometimes means a *legalistic use* of the Ten Commandments. (See 2 Cor. 3:6.) Living "in the spirit, and not in the letter" means serving God from the heart and not in a legalistic manner.

"Legal religion will not answer for this age. We may perform all the outward acts of service and yet be as destitute of the quickening influence of the Holy Spirit as the hills of Gilboa were destitute of dew and rain. We all need spiritual moisture, and we need also the bright beams of the Sun of Righteousness to soften and subdue our hearts."—*Testimonies*, vol. 6, pp. 417, 418.

15. Who is the only answer to the human dilemma? Acts 4:12.

Peter addressed his sermon to a select group. It consisted of the wealthiest, most intellectual and powerful people in the land. They formed the court which had condemned Jesus to death. But Peter was not afraid to point out that Jesus of Nazareth was the only answer to the human problem. Only through Him can sinners find deliverance and salvation.

Paul heartily agreed! Knowing God is knowing Jesus and allowing Him, by the presence of the Holy Spirit, to reign in your heart. (Compare Romans 2:29 with 8:9, 10; 10:8; Col. 3:16.)

Christ's righteousness for the helpless sinner. "The Lord in His great

mercy sent a most precious message to His people through Elders Waggoner and Jones. This message was to bring more prominently before the world the uplifted Saviour, the sacrifice for the sins of the whole world. It presented justification through faith in the Surety; it invited the people to receive the righteousness of Christ, which is made manifest in obedience to all the commandments of God. Many had lost sight of Jesus. They needed to have their eyes directed to His divine person, His merits, and His changeless love for the human family. All power is given into His hands, that He may dispense rich gifts unto men, imparting the priceless gift of His own righteousness to the helpless human agent. This is the message that God commanded to be given to the world. It is the third angel's message, which is to be proclaimed with a loud voice, and attended with the outpouring of His Spirit in a large measure."—*Testimonies to Ministers*, pp. 91, 92.

APPLICATIONS: Are you willing to share from your own experience:

- When you knew God's will, why did you chose to go your own way?
- What was it that changed your mind? Why did you decide to serve Christ?
- What wonderful blessings have you received since you found Jesus as Saviour and Lord?

(FR) **FURTHER STUDY AND MEDITATION:** Study Isaiah 1 and 58 and determine the value of true heart religion rather than a formal code. Read the chapter entitled "Repentance" in *Steps to Christ*, pp. 23-36 and "Calls for a Revival" in *Selected Messages*, book 1, pp. 121-128.

SUMMARY: Suppression of revealed truth and rejection of God result in confusion and tragedy. On the other hand, God offers a glorious reward for all those who, by His grace, serve Him with a righteous heart.

YEAR OF ADVENTIST WORLD MISSION

Celebrations and Mission Festivals Begin October 20

One hundred years ago Sabbath School members sponsored an exciting, special mission project—the *Pitcairn*. This schooner plied the waters of the South Pacific, visiting island after island for 10 years, bringing the Advent message of hope to thousands.

Today the South Pacific has one of the highest densities of Adventists in the world.

October 20 is again the date when another great mission venture begins—

Watch for news!

The Human Dilemma and God's Solution

THIS WEEK'S STUDY: Romans 3:1-31.



MEMORY TEXT: "But now the righteousness of God without the law is manifested, being witnessed by the law and the prophets; even the righteousness of God which is by faith of Jesus Christ unto all and upon all them that believe: for there is no difference: for all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God" (Romans 3:21-23).

CALVARY—GOD'S SOLUTION. Because God sees that every human being is a sinner in need of salvation, all must receive Christ's righteousness made available by His death on the cross.

OUTLINE:

- I. The Jews Have No Advantage (Rom. 3:1-4).
- II. God Is a Just Judge (Rom. 3:5-8).
- III. Without Christ, No One Is Righteous (Rom. 3:9-12).
- IV. A Portrayal of Sinful Living (Rom. 3:13-18).
- V. The Function of the Law (Rom. 3:19, 20).
- VI. The Righteousness of God (Rom. 3:21-31).

OUR SHAME IN GOD'S PRESENCE. Walter Luthi illustrates the tragedy of the human condition emphasized in Romans chapter 3:

"Some time ago I had the opportunity of looking at the memoirs of a man convicted of a serious crime, and imprisoned. Among other things, he wrote that the most painful part of his punishment came immediately after entering prison, when he had to lay out all his personal belongings under the eye of a warden: his comb and mirror, pencil, fountain pen, diary, pen knife, wallet, wrist watch, and finally even his clothes. And there he stood naked before putting on a strange, cold prison uniform. When we read this chapter we experience something of the pain of dispossession right down to one's bare skin, and we are spared no humiliation or suffering. We are divested of all our pearls. Let us not mourn for them! For we are to be given the one pearl before whose brilliance all others fade, the pearl of great price. 'They are justified by his grace as a gift, through the redemption which is in Christ Jesus.' . . . All our own clothes are certainly stripped off, 'but now the righteousness of God has been manifested apart from law.' . . . Notice the suppressed joy that is breaking out in this 'but now'! 'But now' we are handed different clothes; not a strange, cold prison uniform, however; the

clothes we have been wearing up till now were our prison uniform. 'But now' the time has come when we are given new clothes, the clothes of salvation and freedom, of the son and of the daughter.'"—*The Letter to the Romans* (Richmond, Virginia: John Knox Press, 1961), p. 42.

SUN

I. THE JEWS HAVE NO ADVANTAGE (Rom. 3:1-4).

1. Why was it an advantage to the Jews to be entrusted with the oracles of God such as commandments, promises, and prophecies? Rom. 3:1, 2.

The chosen people had lost their heart experience. Unfortunately the Jews had failed to maintain the heart union with God that circumcision symbolized. (See Deut. 10:16; Rom. 2:25-29.) As a result they were unable to live up to the basic requirements of God's law. Circumcision had lost its true meaning.

2. How does Paul show that God is absolutely righteous and consistent, by contrast with inconsistent humanity? Rom. 3:3, 4 (compare 2 Tim. 2:13).

God's promises are conditional. Because the Jews had failed to live up to God's revealed will, they lost their status as the chosen nation. (See Matt. 21:43; 23:37-39.) Nevertheless Jesus and Paul never made void the promise of salvation to them as individuals. This promise is valid to all who accept Christ by faith (Rom. 1:16). Paul strongly emphasizes this point later in the Epistle to the Romans (chapters 9-11). God is faithful to His promises, even though His people are weak and failing.

What advantages do we have as a part of the community of God's last-day people? In the light of ancient Israel's experience, do you see possible pitfalls?

II. GOD IS A JUST JUDGE (Rom. 3:5-8).

3. What argument against Paul's teaching was presented by his opponents? How did Paul answer them? Rom. 3:5-8 (compare Rom. 6:1, 15).

"Evidently Paul had to face the charge that he taught antinomianism [the doctrine that the law need not be kept], and worse."—C. K. Barrett, *A Commentary on the Epistle to the Romans*, *Black's New Testament Commentaries* (London: Adam & Charles Black, 1971), p. 65.

Paul's answer is a simple and vigorous negative. Throughout his Epistle to the Romans, he emphasizes the importance of strict obedience to God's

law as a result of the saving experience God has given us and as an expression of our love for Him. (See Rom. 2:13; 3:31; 7:7, 12, 14; 8:3, 4.) Even though human wickedness reveals, by contrast, the righteousness of God, the gift of His righteousness delivers us from this wickedness.

MON

III. WITHOUT CHRIST, NO ONE IS RIGHTEOUS (Rom. 3:9-12).

4. How would you interpret Paul's statements that all are "under sin" and that "there is none righteous, no, not one"? Rom. 3:9, 10 (compare Rom. 11:32; Gal. 3:22).

Are justified believers "under sin"? Are believers who are enjoying a vibrant relationship with Christ not "righteous"? In the statement of his theme, Paul wrote: "The righteous will live by faith" (Rom. 1:17, NIV). Later in the epistle he speaks of justified believers as having "peace with God" (Rom. 5:1) because "the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost" (verse 5). Justified believers are "servants [Greek: slaves] of righteousness" (Rom. 6:18). They are alive "because of righteousness" (Rom. 8:10). Believing Gentiles "have attained to righteousness" (Rom. 9:30). Justified believers have the law written on their hearts (Rom. 10:6-8). They believe "unto righteousness" (10:10). They remain fallen human beings with biases to evil (1 Cor 9:27; Gal. 5:17, 18), but as long as they "walk in the Spirit" (Gal. 5:16), they have victory in Christ.

When Paul wrote that all are "under sin" and that "there is none righteous, no, not one" (Rom. 3:9, 10), he meant that all who are outside of Christ are under sin. All who have not experienced by faith the saving virtue of Jesus Christ are unrighteous and in need of justification.

5. In what different ways does the apostle identify sinners? Rom. 3:11, 12. What does he mean by saying, "There is none that doeth good, no, not one"? Rom. 3:12 (compare Ps. 14:1-3; Ps. 5:7-9).

Paul's description of humanity. The individual who has failed to enter into a covenant relationship with God is aptly described by the Old Testament passages that Paul has quoted. However, Paul was also familiar with the Old Testament passages that identify as righteous those who have accepted the covenant relationship with God. (See Isa. 51:1, 7; 61:3.) Elsewhere Paul makes it clear that those who have accepted Christ as Saviour and Lord do understand His will, because their seeking has been rewarded. (See Eph. 3:16-21; Rom. 8:14-17.)

Is anyone capable of doing works that are acceptable to God? Paul answers the question himself. "The doers of the law shall be justified" (Rom. 2:13). We are saved by grace alone, but that experience involves being "created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them" (Eph. 2:10). Christ died "so that the righteous principles [decrees] of the law might be fulfilled in us who

do not walk according to the flesh but according to the Spirit" (Rom. 8:4, literal translation).

Paul agreed entirely with John. (See 1 John 2:29.) The born-again, justified believer, through the power of the Holy Spirit, is the only one capable of doing works that are acceptable in the sight of God.

How would you describe the differences in your attitudes and behavior before and after you accepted Christ?

TUE

IV. A PORTRAYAL OF SINFUL LIVING (Rom. 3:13-18).

6. How does Paul describe the speech of the wicked? Rom. 3:13, 14 (compare Ps. 5:7-9; 10:7; 140:3).

Paul strikingly illustrates the disgusting speech of those who have no living relationship with Christ. Elsewhere he describes the kind of speech that is acceptable to God and possible for the person who has received the "mind of Christ." (See 1 Cor. 2:13-16.)

7. How does Paul describe the evil deeds of those who are not serving Christ? Rom. 3:15-17 (compare Isa. 59:7, 8).

8. What essential quality is lacking in the experience of sinful people? Rom. 3:18 (compare Ps. 36:1).

"Those outside of the city are among the most confident, boastful, and apparently zealous ones who live in word, but not in deed and in truth. Their hearts are not right with God. His fear is not before them. The fearful and unbelieving, who are punished with the second death, are of that class who are ashamed of Christ in this world."—*Testimonies*, vol. 2, p. 630.

How do you relate to a person who is living in unashamed opposition to God's will? Suggest some ways of attracting him to Christ.

V. THE FUNCTION OF THE LAW (Rom. 3:19, 20).

9. To what law is Paul referring? Who are those "under the law"? Rom. 3:19 (compare Rom. 2:12; John 10:34).

Paul uses the term *law* in an inclusive sense, for in this passage he has quoted from the psalms and the prophet Isaiah. He is referring to the entire Old Testament, including the Ten Commandments, as the "law."

The phrase "under the law" in Romans 3:19 translates literally from the Greek text, "in the law," or "in connection with the law." The law, God's written Word, speaks to those who have access to it. Most people do, but some do not. Paul has already explained that those who have God's written Word will be judged by it (Rom. 2:12). Those who do not have the written Word will be judged by their response to the voice of the Holy Spirit to their consciences (Rom. 2:12-16). Thus the whole world is guilty before God. Despite the clear teachings of the written Word and the convicting work of the Holy Spirit, all have chosen to sin. Hence, the entire world needs the saving work of Jesus Christ.

WED
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10. What is the role and function of the law in God's saving work for humanity? Romans 3:20 (compare Rom. 7:7).

The Phillips translation paraphrases Romans 3:20 as follows: "No man can justify himself before God by a perfect performance of the Law's demands—indeed it is the straight-edge of the Law that shows us how crooked we are."

No one is justified by the law, because the law has no power to save. (See Gal. 2:16.) The law's function is to point out our sin. (Compare James 1:22-25.) This function is fulfilled by the entire Word of God, and in a special sense by the Ten Commandments.

The law a mirror and a standard. "It [the law] is the mirror into which the sinner is to look if he would have a correct knowledge of his moral character. And when he sees himself condemned by that great standard of righteousness, his next move must be to repent of his sins, and seek forgiveness through Christ. Failing to do this, many try to break the mirror which reveals their defects, to make void the law which points out the blemishes in their life and character."—*Selected Messages*, book 1, p. 219.

Ask yourself: Am I depending upon Jesus day by day, or do I tend to place special spiritual value on my own efforts?

VI. THE RIGHTEOUSNESS OF GOD (Rom. 3:21-31).

Having graphically demonstrated the universal human problem, and having stated that law-keeping is not the means of salvation, Paul now gives the only viable solution—receiving Christ's righteousness.

11. What is the only way we may receive God's righteousness? Rom. 3:21, 22.

First, it is vital to understand that reception of the righteousness of God (Rom. 3:21, 22) is what Paul means by justification (verse 20). His argument may be paraphrased: "The law cannot save you from sin. That is to say, the law cannot justify you. It can only point out your sin. But if you

receive the gift of the righteousness of God you will have justification [salvation].”

Second, we can have the gift of the righteousness of God only if we have faith in Jesus Christ.



12. In what sense do we receive the righteousness of God? Are we only declared righteous while we remain sinners, or is there also a gift to our hearts? Rom. 3:24; 8:9, 10.

The term *justification* may refer to vindication in a court of law. In this sense the term means that, when we believe, God declares us righteous by crediting the righteousness of Christ to our account. *This is part of Paul's meaning* when he speaks of justification. (See *Selected Messages*, book 1, p. 367.)

Justification is also a heart experience. Paul identifies justification with the reception of Christ's righteousness. He calls this the gift of grace. "They are justified by his grace as a gift" (Rom. 3:24, RSV). Grace is a gift to the heart of the believer. (See 2 Cor. 9:8, 14; 1 Cor. 1:4, 5.) Grace is the power of Christ manifest in the life.

Romans chapter 8 compares the unjustified state with the justified state. The saved person is the one who has received the Spirit of Christ. "But you are not in the flesh, you are in the Spirit, if in fact the Spirit of God dwells in you. . . . But if Christ is in you, although your bodies are dead because of sin, your spirits are alive because of righteousness" (verses 9, 10, RSV). The gift of the righteousness of God is justification (Rom. 3:20-22). The righteousness of God is ours when we receive the Holy Spirit. Hence, the Spirit brings the experience of justification to our hearts.

Martin Luther saw the point: "Then what does justify? Hearing the voice of the Bridegroom, hearing the proclamation of faith—when this is heard, it justifies. Why? Because it brings the Holy Spirit, who justifies.

"From this it is sufficiently evident what the distinction is between the Law and the Gospel. The Law never brings the Holy Spirit; therefore it does not justify, because it only teaches what we ought to do. But the Gospel does bring the Holy Spirit, because it teaches what we ought to receive."—*Luther's Works*, p. 208.

13. In his Epistle to Titus, how did Paul define justification? Titus 3:5-7.

"He saved us . . . so that, *having been justified* by his grace, we might become heirs" (Titus 3:5-7, NIV; italics supplied). Salvation is justification. How does the Lord save or justify us? By "the washing of rebirth and renewal by the Holy Spirit" (verse 5, NIV). Justification includes the new-birth experience. God declares righteous those upon whom He simultaneously bestows Christ's righteousness by the Holy Spirit.

The Holy Spirit fits us for heaven. "We can be fitted for heaven only through the work of the Holy Spirit upon the heart; for we must have Christ's righteousness as our credentials if we would find access to the Father. In order that we may have the righteousness of Christ, we need daily to be transformed by the influence of the Spirit, to be a partaker of the divine nature."—*Selected Messages*, book 1, p. 374.

- 14. What provision of heaven made it possible for God to justify us? What are the results of justification in our lives? Rom. 3:25-31 (compare Heb. 8:10-12).**
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HOW CAN I SHARE CHRIST'S RIGHTEOUSNESS? When witnessing to a person who does not know Christ or His Word how can I convince him or her of the eternal importance of receiving Christ's righteousness by faith? Keeping in mind that not all witnessing is verbal, list some ways in which you can witness to such a person.



FURTHER STUDY AND MEDITATION: On the subject of the gift of God's righteousness study the following passages: Job 29:14; Ps. 37:30, 31; 132:9; Isa. 32:15-17; 61:10, 11; Rev. 3:5; 19:7, 8. Read *The Great Controversy*, pp. 461, 467, 468; *Christ's Object Lessons*, pp. 163, 168-170, 311-317; *The Desire of Ages*, p. 762.

SUMMARY: Romans chapter 3 reveals that, because all have sinned, all are in need of a Saviour. The law cannot save. Its function is to reveal sin, not to relieve it. Salvation comes only through Jesus Christ, who died for our sins. Everyone who truly believes in Him receives justification, the gift of His righteousness.

Mission Photo, Poster, and Story Contests

for Year of Adventist World Mission

DETAILS

IN SABBATH SCHOOL TOMORROW

Believe and Be Right With God

THIS WEEK'S STUDY: Romans 4:1-25.



MEMORY TEXT: "For what saith the scripture? Abraham believed God, and it was counted unto him for righteousness" (Romans 4:3).

BELIEVE AND LIVE. It is impossible to earn God's forgiveness and favor. As sinners, we can have salvation only as by faith we rely totally on the gift of Christ's righteousness.

OUTLINE:

- I. Righteousness—Not by Works (Rom. 4:1-8).
- II. Righteousness—Not by Law (Rom. 4:9-17).
- III. God Fulfills His Promises (Rom. 4:18-22).
- IV. Believe in Him Who Raised Jesus (Rom. 4:23-25).

LEAN ON CHRIST. John G. Paton pioneered the work of Christian missions in the New Hebrides islands (Vanuatu), in the southwest Pacific. Translating the New Testament into the native language, he had difficulty finding a word for *believe*. He translated Paul's answer to the question of the Philippian jailer, "What must I do to be saved?": "Lean your whole weight upon the Lord Jesus Christ and be saved."

This is the message of Romans chapter 4. In the stressful existence of everyday life, in which sheer survival is often the most important concern, the temptation is to rely upon our own resources. In the incessant battle with the enemy of souls, we are inclined to depend upon the potency of our own wills. Paul reminds us that faith is total dependence upon the will of God. However important and forceful our efforts to serve God, we must always acknowledge the truth of Jesus' assertion: "'Apart from me you can do nothing'" (John 15:5, RSV). In effect, Jesus says: Lean your whole weight upon Me, and I will make you right with God; I will keep you right with God; and I will give you eternal life with God.

I. RIGHTEOUSNESS—NOT BY WORKS (Rom. 4:1-8).

1. Why could not Abraham's *good* works make him right with God? Rom. 4:1, 2, 4 (compare 3:20-22).

Paul has already explained that works cannot make us right with God (Rom. 3:20). The point is that present obedience to the commandments of God cannot atone for past disobedience. We must accept the Saviour, who has already atoned.

Are works important? Does God want us to obey His law? The Bible answers with a resounding Yes to both questions. But never does God want us to imagine that our good works will make us right with Him, keep us right with Him, or earn us eternal life. We must always lean on Jesus!

Paul opposed works of law—works performed with the intention of earning salvation (Rom. 4:2, 4). Such an intention only involves us in greater debt to God. Both Paul and James extolled works of faith—works performed as a result of faith and an evidence of Christ's righteousness in the heart. (See Rom. 2:13; Eph. 2:10; James 2:14-26.)

SUN

2. What does the Bible mean by saying that faith was "counted unto" Abraham as righteousness? Rom. 4:3 (compare Gen. 15:6).

What is faith? Faith is believing in Christ in such a way that we are willing to depend entirely upon Him. A study of the the verb *to believe* in Scripture demonstrates that faith involves a union with God that affects all our attitudes and actions. In Scripture, belief in God is not merely acceptance of ideas, doctrines, or propositions, but acceptance of God into the life, resulting in total practical commitment to the lifestyle that God would have us follow. (See Ps. 78:7, 8; Isa. 1:21, 26; compare Hebrews 11.)

Why was Abraham's faith counted as righteousness? D. Stuart Briscoe explains: "Shortly before I married his daughter, my father-in-law said to me, 'Stuart, if you drive over to Austria and go to the little border town of Feldkirk, at a certain address you will find a person who has some funds which I have placed in your name. Go and collect them and you will have more than enough for three weeks vacation on the continent of Europe.' I believed him, traveled over, met the person, in faith claimed what he had promised, and found that my father-in-law, in sheer grace, had actually placed the funds to my account."—D. Stuart Briscoe, *The Communicator's Commentary: Romans* (Waco, Texas: Word Books, 1982), p. 99.

When we believe Christ, as Abraham did, we are accounted righteous. (See Rom. 4:5.) What does that mean? When Stuart Briscoe's father-in-law placed money to his account he performed a legal transaction; but more than that, he gave his son-in-law spending power. When Christ's righteousness is credited to us He makes us right with God and gives us the power to live holy lives. Because faith, in the Bible sense, involves heart union with Christ, a person who has faith has righteousness.

What is the meaning of the verb *counted*? Paul is using an Old Testament term to illustrate the truth of righteousness by faith. The verb *to count* is translated three different ways in the King James Version of Romans 4: *counted* (Rom. 4:3); *reckoned* (Rom. 4:4); *imputed* (Rom. 4:6).

The Hebrew word used in Genesis 15:6, translated "counted" in the King James Version, has quite a number of meanings as it is used throughout the Old Testament: to think, devise, plan, count, reckon, esteem, value, regard, invent. Obviously we have to give it the meaning that applies best in the context.

MON

The meaning of Genesis 15:6 and Romans 4:3: God is never said to count (reckon, impute) something to be true that is not true. God did not declare Abraham to be something that he was not. The imputation of righteousness to Abraham was not a legal declaration of something false. God counted (reckoned, imputed) Abraham to be righteous, not because of his works, but because his faith/grace relationship with God involved the gift of the Holy Spirit to his heart.

God never counts an unregenerate sinner to be righteous. When the unregenerate person believes in Christ his life is transformed by the new-birth experience. At the point at which the Holy Spirit is bestowed, the individual is counted (imputed, reckoned) righteous. When God "justifies the ungodly" (Rom. 4:5, RSV), they do not remain ungodly. "Having been set free from sin, [they] have become slaves of righteousness" (Rom. 6:18, RSV).

Abraham believed; God transformed his heart and *simultaneously* declared the reality of His act. The imputation of righteousness (justification) involved both the transformation and the declaration. The declaration was God's recognition of His own presence and power in Abraham's life.

The verb *to count* (*reckon, impute*), in both Hebrew and Greek, sometimes refers to people being regarded as exactly what they are. Nehemiah's treasurers were "counted faithful" because they were (Neh. 13:13). The Emim were counted as giants because they were giants (Deut. 2:11, 20). Job counted his comforters stupid because they were (Job 18:3). God counted Abraham righteous because the righteousness of God was bestowed upon him by the gift of the Holy Spirit to his heart. (Compare Rom. 8:9, 10.)

The verb *to count* (*reckon, impute*) sometimes refers to a tangible gift, or statement of ownership. When the tithe was counted (reckoned, imputed) to the Levites it was given to them. It became their possession. (See Num. 18:26-30.) When the town Beeroth was counted (reckoned, imputed) to the tribe of Benjamin it became the possession of that tribe. (See 2 Sam. 4:2.) In the same manner, when righteousness was counted (reckoned, imputed) to Abraham it became his possession. This did not mean that he became righteous independent of God. The imputation of righteousness to Abraham involved *the bestowal of righteousness upon him by the gift of the Holy Spirit.*

Ellen White's understanding of imputed righteousness.

a. *The righteousness of Christ is put to the believer's account.* "If you give yourself to Him [Christ], and accept Him as your Saviour, then, sinful as your life may have been, for His sake you are accounted righteous. Christ's character stands in place of your character, and you are accepted before God just as if you had not sinned."—*Steps to Christ*, p. 62; see also *Selected Messages*, book 1, p. 367.

b. *The righteousness of Christ is bestowed by the Holy Spirit upon the*

heart of the believer. "By receiving His imputed righteousness, through the transforming power of the Holy Spirit, we become like Him."—Ellen G. White Comments, *SDA Bible Commentary*, vol. 6, p. 1098.

"In ourselves we are sinners; but in Christ we are righteous. Having made us righteous through the imputed righteousness of Christ, God pronounces us just, and treats us as just."—*Selected Messages*, book 1, p. 394.

"He has become sin for us that we might become the righteousness of God in Him. Through faith in His name He imputes unto us His righteousness, and it becomes a living principle in our life."—*That I May Know Him*, p. 302.

"Let perfect obedience be rendered to God through the imputed righteousness of Christ, and we shall reveal to the world the fact that God loves us as he loves Jesus."—*Signs of the Times*, May 28, 1896.

3. According to the psalmist, how does God deal with the sin problem? Romans 4:6-8 (compare Ps. 32:1, 2).

Paul identifies justification with imputation of righteousness (Rom. 4:2, 3). Then he identifies both terms with forgiveness by quoting Psalm 32:1, 2. Forgiveness is justification or imputation of righteousness.

When God forgives He not only wipes out the guilt of past sins, He bestows His righteousness upon the believer. Forgiveness (justification, imputation) involves transformation of heart by the Holy Spirit.

Forgiveness (justification, imputation of righteousness) is more than a judicial act. "God's forgiveness is not merely a judicial act by which He sets us free from condemnation. It is not only forgiveness *for* sin, but reclaiming *from* sin. It is the outflow of redeeming love that transforms the heart."—*Thoughts From the Mount of Blessing*, p. 114.

Are you constantly receiving the gift of Christ's righteousness? By coming to Him every day in penitence and surrender you may have the presence of Christ in your life. Peace with God, victory over sin, and moment-by-moment preparedness for heaven are the results of this thrilling experience.

TUE II. RIGHTEOUSNESS—NOT BY LAW (Rom. 4:9-17).

4. How does Paul establish that both Jews and Gentiles are saved in the same manner? Rom. 4:9, 10.

Circumcision was intended to be merely an external mark or sign of the covenant relationship with God. (See Gen. 17:7, 11.) Circumcision was not a means of obtaining God's favor. "It was only a sign and seal to Abraham and his descendants of the righteousness that comes by faith. Circumcision did not convey the righteousness but only gave outward evidence of it.

Similarly for the Christian, baptism does not bring righteousness, but the ordinance may be regarded as a sign and seal of the faith and justification experienced before baptism.”—*SDA Bible Commentary*, vol. 6, p. 515.

Abraham righteous before circumcision. Paul seeks to convince his readers, including Jewish Christians, that neither circumcision nor obedience to any other divine law can earn righteousness and salvation. He refers to the historical fact that Abraham received the gift of righteousness before God commanded him to practice circumcision. Abraham believed and obeyed God in Haran when he was 75 years old (Gen. 12:1-4). Righteousness was imputed to him long before he was given the rite of circumcision, because he was willing to exercise his total trust in God. (Compare Gen. 15:6; 17:1-11; Rom. 4:11.) He was told that circumcision was to be “a sign of the covenant between me and you” (Gen. 17:11, RSV).

5. In what sense is Abraham the father of both Jews and Gentiles? Rom. 4:11, 12.

A true Jew. God’s acceptance of Abraham as righteous was dependent upon Abraham’s act of faith. In light of this observation Paul makes the following deductions:

- Abraham is the father of those who manifest the same faith toward God as he did, regardless of their ethnic background. He is a true Jew who belongs to the family of God’s believing people.

- The circumcised natural descendants of Abraham are his spiritual children only if they enter into a faith-grace relationship with God as Abraham did. Such individuals have no right to call Abraham their father or to claim the promises of God, unless they manifest the faith of Abraham.

6. On what basis did God promise Abraham that he would be the heir of the world? Rom. 4:13-15.

Contrasting views of the promises of God. Paul’s statement concerning the promises of God to Abraham stands in striking contrast to the beliefs of the rabbis. They held that all promises were made to Abraham on the basis of his obedience to the law. Paul stresses that God fulfills His promises because of Abraham’s faith and the faith of his spiritual children.

What did God promise Abraham? He promised him countless descendants (Gen. 12:2; 15:5), and the possession of the land of Canaan (Gen. 12:7) as a foretaste of the heavenly Canaan (Heb. 11:10). All the nations of the earth were to be blessed in Abraham (Gen. 12:3) or in his seed (Gen. 22:18). The Messiah would be his Seed, through whom the whole world would be offered eternal life (Gal. 3:8). “Those who receive the abundance of grace and the free gift of righteousness [will] reign in life through the one man Jesus Christ” (Rom. 5:17, RSV).

No law, no transgression (Rom. 4:15): “Paul seems to be using this negative statement to confirm the truth of his positive assertion that where a law does exist, transgression is revealed, and wrath impends. He is trying to make clear to the legalists that if righteousness is not by faith but by law, there is no hope of salvation.”—*SDA Bible Commentary*, vol. 6, p. 516. (Compare Rom. 3:20; 7:7.)

- 7. What is the relationship between faith, grace, and promise? Rom. 4:16, 17.**
-

Key concepts contrasted. In Romans 4 the apostle compares and contrasts the terms *law*, *works*, and *merit* with the terms *grace*, *promise*, and *faith*. Paul implies that the legalist will try to obtain salvation on the basis of law, works, and merit. But, as Paul shows, salvation can come only through grace, promise, and faith.

How can we avoid falling into the habit of attempting to earn salvation by our own efforts?



III. GOD FULFILLS HIS PROMISES (Rom. 4:18-22).

- 8. In what apparently impossible situation did Abraham maintain steadfast faith in God? Rom. 4:18-22.**
-

In the Epistle to the Galatians, Paul reminded his readers of Abraham's lapse into faithlessness (Gal. 4:21-31). Abraham's attempt to earn the promise by having a child by Hagar is an example of the old-covenant experience. The promises of God are received only by faith. They cannot be earned by human effort. In Romans 4, Paul ignores Abraham's spiritual lapse, reminding us that, despite all evidence to the contrary, he came to trust God's promise implicitly. This is why God was able to impute to him His righteousness.

- 9. What did faith do for Sarah? Heb. 11:11, 12.**
-

How delightful to discover that not only does the Lord honor our faith by bestowing His righteousness upon us but also when we trust Him, He supplies our emotional, physical, and material needs. His grace is bountifully manifested in the gift of the Holy Spirit to our hearts and in a myriad of other gifts that bring us happiness.

IV. BELIEVE IN HIM WHO RAISED JESUS (Rom. 4:23-25).

- 10. According to the following passages, what are the results in our lives when we have faith in the living Saviour?**

Rom. 4:23-25 _____

Rom. 10:9, 10 _____

John 12:46 _____

1 John 5:4, 5 _____

Infinite grace available. "Through faith in Christ, every deficiency of character may be supplied, every defilement cleansed, every fault corrected, every excellence developed.

"Ye are complete in him." Colossians 2:10.

"Prayer and faith are closely allied, and they need to be studied together. In the prayer of faith there is a divine science; it is a science that everyone who would make his lifework a success must understand. . . .

"For the pardon of sin, for the Holy Spirit, for a Christlike temper, for wisdom and strength to do His work, for any gift He has promised, we may ask; then we are to believe that we receive, and return thanks to God that we have received."—*Education*, pp. 257, 258.

ARE YOU RECEIVING BY FAITH THE GIFTS THAT GOD WISHES TO BESTOW? List some of the blessings that you have received this past week as you have prayed and trusted in Christ's willingness to answer:



FURTHER STUDY AND MEDITATION: Read *Patriarchs and Prophets*, pp. 136-140; *Education*, pp. 253-261.

SUMMARY: Justification is the imputation of righteousness to the believer. This involves two simultaneous acts of God: He credits to the believer the righteousness of Christ, and He bestows the righteousness of Christ upon him or her by the gift of the Holy Spirit. This experience is the qualification for salvation.

Peace With God

THIS WEEK'S STUDY: Romans 5.



MEMORY TEXT: "But God commendeth his love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us" (Romans 5:8).

PEACE RESULTING FROM THE ASSURANCE OF SALVATION. Despite the existence of sin and death, God's Word assures us of eternal salvation through the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. The condition is that we receive the "abundance of grace and of the gift of righteousness" (Rom. 5:17).

OUTLINE:

- I. Peace Like a River (Rom. 5:1-5).
- II. Reconciled by His Death (Rom. 5:6-8).
- III. Saved by His Life (Rom. 5:9-11).
- IV. More Abundant Grace (Rom. 5:12-21).

PEACE WITH GOD CANNOT BE EARNED. Many Christians have difficulty believing that their guilt has been abolished. They go through life condemning themselves for the sins of the past. They attempt in various ways to compensate for their failures. Some will profess belief that Christ has forgiven them, but admit that they cannot forgive themselves. Think of the unconscious blasphemy involved in that attitude. Without realizing it, such people are saying, in effect, "I am more tender in conscience than God. He can forgive me, but I cannot forgive myself." Like the great apostle to the Gentiles, every sinner needs to hear the words of the Saviour, "Your trial is over; I have completely atoned for you. Go in peace."

I. PEACE LIKE A RIVER (Rom. 5:1-5).

How soothing it is to sit on a warm Sabbath afternoon by a slowly moving river. Peace like a river—how may our turbulent, guilty spirits find it?

1. What answer to this question does Paul give? Why is it the only effective answer? Rom. 5:1 (compare Isa. 66:12).

Justified by faith. When Christ justifies us He abolishes our guilt (1 John 2:2; 4:10) and transforms our hearts (2 Cor. 5:17). People pay large sums of money to other human beings for the very gifts only Christ can give. Whatever the depths of our past degradation, however impure our lives may have been, there is forgiveness and cleansing awaiting us through the sacrifice and infinite love of our living Lord.

Peace with God. The Bible views unrepentant sinners as enemies of God (Rom. 5:10; 8:7). They have no peace, no quietness, and no assurance of life beyond. "The wicked are like the troubled sea, when it cannot rest, whose waters cast up mire and dirt" (Isa. 57:20). God's provision of righteousness by faith brings peace to the once troubled and alienated soul. (See John 14:27.)

SUN

2. What two results of justification by faith are mentioned in Romans 5:2? (Compare verse 5.)

Through Christ "we have access by faith." Christ introduces us to God. The same thought is expressed in 1 Peter 3:18. By virtue of His sacrifice, Christ is able to bring us back to God and to introduce us to the glorious state of grace and favor in which we now stand. (See Heb. 10:19-22.)

We rejoice in hope of glory. This phrase may be translated, "Let us go on rejoicing in hope of God's glory." We have hope of sharing God's glory at the second coming of Jesus (Rom. 8:18; 1 Peter 1:7). Even so, the glory of His character may be shared in the here and now. Paul comes back to this theme in Romans 5:5: "And hope does not disappoint us, because God has poured out his love into our hearts by the Holy Spirit, whom he has given us" (NIV). The Holy Spirit brings to our hearts the glory of Christ's character. He fulfills for us the promise of Christ: "And the glory which thou gavest me I have given them" (John 17:22). The Holy Spirit bestows upon us "the mind of Christ" (1 Cor 2:16).

3. Why should we rejoice in our sufferings? Rom. 5:3, 4.

The Christian will not be exempt from trouble and sorrow. (See Acts 14:22.) The apostle explained how Christian faith uses tribulations for the perfection of character: "Because we know that suffering produces perseverance; perseverance, character; and character, hope" (Rom. 5:3, 4, NIV). There is a natural line of development here. Suffering need not destroy us; by Christ's grace we can persevere. Thus we become stronger characters, more dependent upon Him and more victorious over sin and self-pity. Then comes realized hope! The Holy Spirit gives us the glory of the character of Jesus (verse 5). Our rejoicing is not some morbid appreciation of suffering; it is abiding gratitude that Christ has overruled evil to bring us into deeper fellowship with Himself.

Are you enjoying the blessed results of being set right with God because of your trust in Him? If the results that Paul has described are realized in your life, you have the assurance of justification. Suppose those results are not present in your experience. On the basis of Paul's message, what should you do?

MON

II. RECONCILED BY HIS DEATH (Rom. 5:6-8).

4. Why is God able to give us the character of Christ by the Holy Spirit? Rom. 5:6.

Christ's death atoned for the sins of every person who has ever lived (1 John 2:2). Christ bore the guilt of our sins and suffered the punishment due to us (1 Peter 2:24; Isa. 53:5, 6). This is what Paul means when he says, "When we were enemies, we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son" (Rom. 5:10). This means that all have the offer of salvation, even though not all accept it. Calvary made reconciliation available; it becomes a realized fact only for those who "receive" it (Rom. 5:17).

The cross made it possible for Christ to pour the Holy Spirit in measureless power upon reconciled believers. (See Luke 24:49; Acts 1:8.)

The boundless resources of His grace. "Before offering Himself as the sacrificial victim, He instructed His disciples regarding a most essential and complete gift which He was to bestow upon His followers—the gift that would bring within their reach the boundless resources of His grace. 'I will pray the Father,' He said, 'and He shall give you another Comforter.'"—*The Acts of the Apostles*, p. 47.

5. What contrast does Paul draw between human and divine love? Rom. 5:7, 8 (compare John 15:13; 1 Peter 3:18).

"The love of God is shown in sharp contrast to man's love by the reminder that mankind is very reticent to lay down its life even for good causes and law-abiding people, but God's Son accepted the death of the cross for those who are totally unworthy."—D. Stuart Briscoe, *The Communicator's Commentary: Romans*, pp. 115, 116.

Have you accepted Christ's death as the sacrifice for your sins?

TUE

III. SAVED BY HIS LIFE (Rom. 5:9-11).

6. From what does justification save us? Rom. 5:9 (compare 1 Thess. 1:10; 5:9).

Retribution is the inevitable consequence of sin. (See Rev. 14:10; 6:16,

17.) God's wrath is His just and loving displeasure with sin. When an individual identifies himself with sin and refuses the grace of Christ to forsake it, in His mercy God separates that individual from Himself for eternity. Love demands a clean universe. Love allows the sinner to decide his destiny. Love delivers the penitent sinner from the jaws of eternal death. (See John 3:16, 36.)

7. Why is the resurrection of Christ so vital to our eternal salvation? Rom. 5:10 (1 Cor. 15:13-23).

There is much more to our salvation than being saved from what we have done. "We shall be saved by His life." Jesus said, "I will not leave you comfortless: I will come to you. . . . Because I live, ye shall live also" (John 14:18, 19). "He that hath the Son hath life; and he that hath not the Son of God hath not life" (1 John 5:12; compare Rom. 8:11).

We receive life from Christ. "Christ was treated as we deserve, that we might be treated as He deserves. He was condemned for our sins, in which He had no share, that we might be justified by His righteousness, in which we had no share. *He suffered the death which was ours, that we might receive the life which was His.* 'With His stripes we are healed.'"—*The Desire of Ages*, p. 25. (Italics supplied.)

Are you constantly receiving life from Christ? Are you surrendering your will to Him every day?



IV. MORE ABUNDANT GRACE (Rom. 5:12-21).

8. What was Paul intending to teach by the statement in Romans 5:12?

Three views.

a. Pelagius's view: In the early fifth century A.D. this verse and the passage to follow became the subject of bitter controversy. Pelagius, a Christian theologian from the British Isles, argued that Romans 5:12 means that every human being imitates Adam's fall. "Death passes upon all men," because all men choose to sin. He taught that "new-born children are sinless," as was Adam before he fell.—Reinhold Seeberg, *The History of Doctrines* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Baker, 1895, 1977), book 1, p. 335. He said that no one is born spiritually fallen or guilty. A person becomes guilty only when he chooses to sin. All human beings have the power both to choose not to sin and to put their choice into action. Grace makes it easier for people to choose what is right, but they have the power, in and of themselves, to do what God commands.

b. Augustine's view: Augustine, the famous bishop of Hippo Regius in North Africa, contradicted Pelagius. His teaching is known as "original

sin." He taught that Romans 5:12 should be translated: "Wherefore as by one man, *in whom all sinned*, sin entered into the world and death through sin, and so death went through to all men." Augustine held that when Adam sinned the whole human race sinned. Therefore, the sin and guilt of Adam are passed on to children by their parents. Infants are born guilty of Adam's sin and should be baptized so that the sin can be washed away. Human beings have no freedom to choose what is right. They can be saved only if God chooses to give them irresistible grace. God gives this grace only to the "elect." Hence, God predestines some to be saved and the rest to be lost. In the sixteenth century, Luther and Calvin followed substantially Augustine's teaching on this subject.

c. The scriptural teaching: The teachings of both Pelagius and Augustine on this subject were unscriptural. Pelagius was wrong in teaching that no one is born fallen. Augustine was wrong in teaching that everyone is born guilty. All human beings are born fallen, in need of the saving, transforming grace of Jesus Christ, but not guilty until they commit an act of sin. We believe that Romans 5:12 means that because of Adam's sin every infant born subsequently is "sinful," not in the sense of being guilty at birth, but in the sense of inheriting a fallen nature with its sinful tendency, in need of spiritual transformation. We believe the teaching of the apostle Paul that human beings have freedom to choose what is right, but, apart from the grace of Christ, they cannot do it. (See Rom. 7:18.) The same opportunity of salvation is offered to all humanity. God's free saving grace is given to everyone who chooses Jesus Christ as Saviour and Lord.

Fallen human nature dependent upon Christ. "The result of the eating of the tree of knowledge of good and evil is manifest in every man's experience. There is in his nature a bent to evil, a force which, unaided, he cannot resist. To withstand this force, to attain that ideal which in his inmost soul he accepts as alone worthy, he can find help in but one power. That power is Christ. Co-operation with that power is man's greatest need."—*Education*, p. 29.

"It was possible for Adam, before the fall, to form a righteous character by obedience to God's law. But he failed to do this, and because of his sin our natures are fallen and we cannot make ourselves righteous."—*Steps to Christ*, p. 62.

"Immortality, promised to man on condition of obedience, had been forfeited by transgression. Adam could not transmit to his posterity that which he did not possess; and there could have been no hope for the fallen race had not God, by the sacrifice of His Son, brought immortality within their reach."—*The Great Controversy*, p. 533.

9. How do Romans 5:13, 14 relate to verse 12? What is Paul's argument?

Between the time of Adam and the giving of the law at Sinai people sinned. Because of sin, the world suffered the Flood, and Sodom and Gomorrah suffered destruction. Nevertheless, in this period mankind did not

have Adam's advantages or the advantage of the written law as later given at Sinai. Paul's point is that between Adam and Moses, death reigned on earth not merely because of people's acts of sin, but especially because of their heritage from Adam.



10. What is the central point Paul makes as he contrasts the work of Adam and the work of Christ? Rom. 5:15-21.

Notice that the contrast is stated seven times.

	Adam	Christ
Verse 15:	Death	Grace
Verse 16:	Condemnation	Justification
Verse 17:	Death	Righteousness
Verse 18:	Condemnation	Acquittal
Verse 19:	Many sinners	Many righteous
Verse 20:	Sin increased	Greater grace
Verse 21:	Sin reigned	Grace reigns

Because of Adam's sin, all his descendants were born fallen, pre-disposed to commit sin, and subject to inevitable death. Because of Christ's death and resurrection, at every stage in history there is deliverance from condemnation, power to overcome sin, and the assurance that death will be a temporary sleep. Christ was "the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world" (Rev. 13:8). Abraham was born fallen, in need of a Saviour, but he did not live his life in fear of condemnation to eternal death. The Lord "preached the gospel beforehand to Abraham" (Gal. 3:8, RSV). Certainly Abraham's death would have been eternal if Christ had not died and risen. (See 1 Cor. 15:17, 18.) But the Lord foresaw that He would succeed in His effort to redeem mankind.

11. Because Adam's sin "led to condemnation for all men" (Rom. 5:18, RSV), how can we teach that infants are not guilty at birth?

The Bible principle is that no human being suffers for the guilt of a parent. (See Deut. 24:16; Jer. 31:30; Eze. 18:20.)

"It is inevitable that children should suffer from the consequences of parental wrong-doing, but they are not punished for the parents' guilt, except as they participate in their sins."—*Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 306.

There is an important distinction between condemnation and guilt. A child born with AIDS is condemned to die of the parent's disease, but the child is not guilty of any sin committed by the parent. We were born with Adam's disease, fallen human nature, which could not live in God's presence until transformed by the Saviour. In that sense we were born under condemnation. But we were not born guilty of Adam's sin. We became guilty only when we chose to sin.

Ellen White wrote: "The sin of our first parents brought guilt and sorrow upon the world, and had it not been for the goodness and mercy of God, would have plunged the race into hopeless despair."—*Patriarchs*

and *Prophets*, p. 61. This and similar statements must be explained on the basis of everything else she wrote on the subject. **She nowhere says that infants are born guilty.** The guilt brought to the world by Adam's sin results because fallen natures are predisposed to choose sin. We were born with a natural bent toward evil. Prior to the new birth experience (justification) sin was natural to us all.

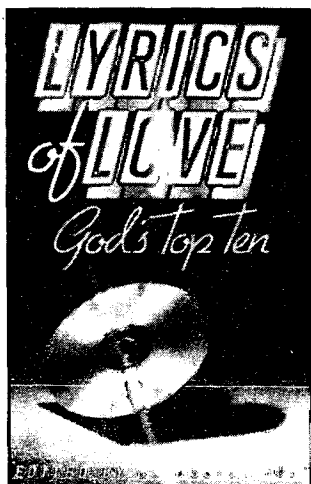
The important point is that for all humanity condemnation to eternal death was abolished by Christ's sacrifice. (See John 6:33; Rom. 8:1.) Such condemnation is earned again by those who reject Christ and choose sin. (See John 3:18, 36.)

ARE YOU ENJOYING LIFE IN CHRIST? Do you have the inner assurance of freedom from condemnation? How do you plan to share this experience with others? What major points in Romans chapter 5 would you find helpful in witnessing to those about you?



FURTHER STUDY AND MEDITATION: Read the last portion of "The Temptation and Fall" in *Patriarchs and Prophets*, pp. 59-62.

SUMMARY: As Christians we can enjoy life to its fullest because of Jesus. Through Him we have a new lease on life. Unlike the many who live without Jesus, we can enjoy abiding peace, for we have the assurance of eternal salvation. In the face of pressures and difficulties we can rest in the love of God.



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Lesson 6

November 4-10

From Death to Life

THIS WEEK'S STUDY: Romans 6.



MEMORY TEXT: "Therefore we are buried with him by baptism into death: that like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life" (Romans 6:4).

DEAD TO SIN AND ALIVE WITH CHRIST. When we are justified we die to sin and begin a new life through the power of Christ. This life of victory is maintained in the same way it was begun—by receiving through faith the righteousness of Christ.

OUTLINE:

- I. Raised With Christ (Rom. 6:1-11).
- II. The Dominion of Grace (Rom. 6:12-14).
- III. Slaves to Righteousness (Rom. 6:15-23).

A CHILD OF THE KING. D. Stuart Briscoe illustrates what it means to be a child of God. "When I was a small boy I was fascinated by the simple sermon preached in my home church by an old coal miner who had recently been to Buckingham Palace to be decorated by the king for bravery. He had placed his considerable bulk under the collapsing roof of the mine and held it up while his colleagues escaped through his legs. As far as he was concerned, he hadn't done anything particularly noteworthy, and he was far more nervous about going to the palace than about the possibility of facing another mine explosion. I remember his description of the investiture ceremony because of its moving simplicity and humility, and I will never forget how he said, 'I couldn't wait to get out of the palace and back to my little miner's cottage in Whitehaven, but there was a young man beside the king who was perfectly at home in the palace and would never have been comfortable in my cottage.' He paused and smiled and then added, 'You see, he was the Prince of Wales, the king's son, and he was born to the palace.'

"Those who receive Christ are born to the Palace and have the royal blood in their veins exclusively through Him. It is what He has done and who He is in their lives that alone makes reigning in life a possibility. With Him all things are possible; without Him we can but fail."—D. Stuart Briscoe, *The Communicator's Commentary: Romans*, p. 128.

This lesson discusses the results in our lives when we allow Christ to put to death our old life and raise us to new life with Him.

SUN

I. RAISED WITH CHRIST (Rom. 6:1-11).**1. How does the justified person keep from living in sin? Rom. 6:1; 2.**

In other passages, Paul defines justification as the gift of Christ's righteousness (Rom. 3:20-22). Christ justifies us by giving us the new birth experience (Titus 3:5-7). We receive the righteousness of Christ by receiving the Holy Spirit into our hearts (Rom. 8:9; 10). This experience writes the law of God on our hearts and gives us present salvation in Christ (Rom. 10:6-10).

The result is that we have "peace with God" (Rom. 5:1) and the reign of grace in our hearts (Rom. 5:21). We are free from condemnation (Rom. 5:16, 18; 8:1) and free from fear of death (Rom. 5:17). Christ and the Father have come and taken up their abode in our lives through the presence of the Holy Spirit (John 14:17, 18, 23).

Justification is death to sin. Who would want to replace such a thrilling experience of renewal with a reversion to a life of sin? Grace is always greater than sin, but we certainly do not imagine that we can demonstrate the immensity of grace by persisting in sin. "How can we who died to sin still live in it?" (Rom. 6:2, RSV).

2. What is the true meaning of Christian baptism? Rom. 6:3, 4 (compare Col. 2:12).

As Christ died bearing our guilt, was buried, and rose to fullness of life, so we die to sin, are buried in baptism, and come forth to new life with Christ. Baptism by immersion is the only form of baptism that accurately represents this experience. (See Matt. 3:16; John 3:23; Acts 8:38.)

Baptism is meaningful only if the candidate has previously died to sin.

Some are buried alive. "The new birth is a rare experience in this age of the world. This is the reason why there are so many perplexities in the churches. Many, so many, who assume the name of Christ are unsanctified and unholy. They have been baptized, but they were buried alive. Self did not die, and therefore they did not rise to newness of life in Christ."—E. G. White Comments, *SDA Bible Commentary*, vol. 6, p. 1075.

MON

3. What does Paul mean by the death of the "old man"? Rom. 6:5-7 (compare Eph. 4:22-24; Col. 3:1-10).

He died in the past. In the writings of Paul the "old man" is defined as the former manner of life, the old life of habitual sinning. (See Eph. 4:22.) The "old man" does not go on dying in Paul's teaching. His death is not progressive; it is a single event. Note the past tenses in Romans 6:

- Verse 2: "How can we who died" (RSV)
 Verse 4: "We were buried" (RSV)
 Verse 6: "Our old self was crucified" (RSV)
 Verse 7: "For he who died has been justified from sin" (literal translation)
 Verse 8: "Now if we died with Christ" (NIV)

The death of the "old man" (Eph. 4:22), the "old self" (NIV), was an event that for the believer occurred in the past. It is not a gradual process. Nor does Paul anywhere say anything about the "old man" rearing his ugly head and having to be put to sleep again. Paul presents the ideal situation that the "old man" of sin should die once, and never be resurrected. He is dead and buried and that is that! The old life of habitual sinning is resurrected only if the individual rejects Christ and turns again to the habits and practices of his former life.

Paul defines the term "old man." He wrote to the Ephesians: "That ye put off *concerning* the former conversation the old man" (Eph. 4:22, italics supplied). The Greek word translated "conversation" means "manner of life." *The former manner of life is the "old man."* Therefore, Paul defines the "old man" as the old life of sin. He was not instructing the Ephesians to put the old life of sin to death. They had already experienced this in the new birth. He was instructing them to "put off *concerning* the former manner of life." He wanted them to stop committing sins that were characteristic of their former lives of habitual sinning. Colossians 3:3 translates literally: "For you died, and your life has been hidden with Christ in God." The "old man" was dead, but it was still necessary for the Colossians constantly to guard themselves against sin (verse 5). Verse 9 reads literally, "Do not lie to one another, because you have put off the old man with his deeds." Lying was characteristic of their old life of habitual sinning; hence, by Christ's grace, they were to be strictly honest and pure. (Compare verses 7, 8.) The "new man" (verse 10) is the new life of victory in Christ.

"**The old sinful life is dead;** the new life entered into with Christ by the pledge of baptism. Practise the virtues of the Saviour's character. . . . The sins that were practised before conversion, are to be put off, with the old man. With the new man, Christ Jesus, are to be put on 'kindness, humbleness of mind, meekness, longsuffering.' "—*Sons and Daughters of God*, p. 300.

Death of the "old man" is justification: The Greek of Romans 6:7 translates: "For he who died has been justified from sin." "As we have seen previously, 'justification' has a legal connotation. But in this context Paul appears to be broadening the use of the word. In the same way that a man who has been exonerated in a court of law has the freedom to walk out of court and take a cab to his home, so the 'justified' believer, in addition to his technical justification, has the practical freedom to walk away from the dominating power of sin in his life. To begin to understand this is to see how far those who believe they are saved to live as they wish have strayed from the truth of the all-encompassing gospel."—D. Stuart Briscoe, *The Communicator's Commentary: Romans*, p. 136.

TUE

4. The person whose old manner of life is dead still retains a fallen human nature that urges toward sin. What can be done about it? 1 Cor. 9:27 (compare Gal. 5:17, 18).

“Besetting sins must be battled with and overcome. Objectionable traits of character, whether hereditary or cultivated, must be compared with the great rule of righteousness, and then conquered in the strength of Christ. Day by day, hour by hour, a vigorous work of self-denial and of sanctification must go on within; then the works will bear witness that Jesus is abiding in the heart by faith.”—*Counsels to Parents and Teachers*, p. 449.

5. How does Paul illustrate the death of the “old man”? Rom. 6:8-11.

Christ does not go on offering sacrifice for sin. Christ “died to sin, once for all” (Rom. 6:10, RSV; compare Heb. 7:27; 9:28; 10:12.)

Consider yourself dead to sin. This is Paul’s message. As Christ, the Sin-bearer, died once for the sins of the whole world, so we are to die to sin by surrendering to Him and allowing Him to justify us. The experience of justification (new birth) is renewed every day (2 Cor. 4:16); but the initial transformation in which we repudiated our old life of habitual sinning is to occur once. As Christ reckons us righteous in Him (Romans 4) because of His indwelling in our hearts, so we are to reckon ourselves “dead to sin and alive to God in Christ Jesus” (Rom. 6:11, RSV). We are to reckon (consider) it so because it is so.

Faith unites the believer to God. “Through faith, irrespective of feeling, Jesus, the Author of our salvation, the Finisher of our faith, will, by His precious grace, strengthen the moral powers, and the sinner may reckon himself ‘to be dead indeed unto sin, but alive unto God through Jesus Christ.’ Simple faith, with the love of Christ in the soul, unites the believer to God. While toiling in battle as a faithful soldier of Christ, he has the sympathy of the whole loyal universe. The ministering angels are round about him to aid in the conflict, so that he may boldly say, ‘The Lord is my helper,’ ‘the Lord is my strength and my shield’; I shall not be overcome. ‘By grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God.’ ”—*Testimonies to Ministers*, pp. 147, 148.

When you are confronted by what seem to be overmastering temptations, do you claim the power of Christ and thank Him for the victory? Thanking Him before you experience the answer is faith. And faith is the victory! (See 1 John 5:4, 5.)

WED

II. THE DOMINION OF GRACE (Rom. 6:12-14).

6. If sin no longer reigns, does it remain in the life? Rom. 6:12, 13.

Certainly our fallen humanity remains with its biases to evil. We noted that under question 5 above. But this fallen self is subdued daily by the power of the indwelling Christ. (See Gal. 2:20.) In Romans 6:12, Paul is talking about the danger of *giving in* to the clamors of our fallen humanity. When we do this, sin reigns in our bodies. When Christ reigns within, sin cannot.

John emphasized the same truth. (See 1 John 3:8, 9, RSV.) John did not teach that, while habitual sin is of the devil, an occasional sin is permissible. All sin is of the devil, and if Christ lives in the life by the Holy Spirit sin cannot exist there.

Overcome as Christ did. "Will man take hold of divine power, and with determination and perseverance resist Satan, as Christ has given him example in His conflict with the foe in the wilderness of temptation? God cannot save man against his will from the power of Satan's artifices. Man must work with his human power, aided by the divine power of Christ, to resist and to conquer at any cost to himself. In short, man must overcome as Christ overcame."—*Testimonies*, vol. 4, pp. 32, 33. (Compare Rev. 3:21.)

7. How effective is grace in our battle with sin? Rom. 6:14.

The text is not saying that the law need no longer be kept. The book of Romans and many other passages of Scripture contradict that idea. (See Rom. 3:31; 7:7; 8:3, 4; James 2:10-12; 1 John 2:4; Rev. 12:17.) Paul's message is that because Christ's grace (His powerful divine presence) is reigning in your heart, you can overcome all sin. The person "under the law" is the one who attempts to overcome in his own strength; he is attempting to use law-keeping as a means of salvation. Earlier in Romans, as well as in Galatians and other epistles, Paul ruled out law-keeping as a means of salvation. (See Rom. 3:20; Gal. 2:16; Eph. 2:8-10.)

What help would you offer someone who is dominated by sin? In the light of Paul's message, what explanation of the problem could you give?



III. SLAVES TO RIGHTEOUSNESS (Rom. 6:15-23).

8. What does it mean to be a slave of obedience? Rom. 6:15-18.

Grace for righteousness. The Greek word translated *servants* in the King James Version means "slaves." Believers are Christ's friends (John 15:15), willing servants or slaves to His manner of life.

Paul rejoices that his readers "have been set free from sin and have become slaves to righteousness" (Rom. 6:18, NIV). When did that happen? When the "old man" died "that we should no longer be slaves to sin" (Rom. 6:6, NIV). What experience did that involve? Literally, "He who

died has been justified from sin" (Rom. 6:7). The death of the "old man" is justification. At justification the Roman believers were set free from sin and became slaves to righteousness. Christ began His reign in their hearts. He was their present holiness and the means by which they could grow in holiness. (See 1 Cor. 1:30.)

"Sanctification is a daily work. Let none deceive themselves with the belief that God will pardon and bless them while they are trampling upon one of His requirements. The willful commission of a known sin silences the witnessing voice of the Spirit, and separates the soul from God. Whatever may be the ecstasies of religious feeling, Jesus cannot abide in the heart that disregards the divine law. God will honor those only who honor Him.

"To whom ye yield yourselves servants to obey, his servants ye are to whom ye obey.' If we indulge anger, lust, covetousness, hatred, selfishness, or any other sin, we become servants of sin. 'No man can serve two masters.' If we serve sin, we cannot serve Christ. The Christian will feel the promptings of sin, for the flesh lusteth against the Spirit; but the Spirit striveth against the flesh, keeping up a constant warfare. Here is where Christ's help is needed. Human weakness becomes united to divine strength, and faith exclaims, 'Thanks be to God, which giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ!'" —*Messages to Young People*, p. 114.

9. What is the relationship between justification and sanctification? Rom. 6:19-23.

The Greek word for *sanctification*, used ten times in the Greek New Testament, means "holiness." It is the word Paul used in Romans 6:19: "So now offer your bodies slaves to righteousness for holiness" (literal translation).

When the Roman Christians were slaves of sin, they were free from righteousness (Rom. 6:20). The fruitage of their lives of sin was death (verse 21). Verse 22 translates: "But now, having been freed from sin, having been enslaved to God, you have your fruit unto holiness, and the end eternal life."

We have already noted that they were freed from sin when the "old man," the old life of habitual sinning, died (verse 6). They were then enslaved to righteousness (verse 18). Being a slave to righteousness is the same experience as being a slave to God (verse 22). The fruitage of that experience is holiness (sanctification, verse 22).

The point is that justification (the gift of righteousness) results in sanctification (holiness of life). The one is the cause of the other. Justification is Christ bestowed; sanctification is Christ possessed.

"Righteousness is holiness, likeness to God, and 'God is love.' 1 John 4:16. It is conformity to the law of God, for 'all thy commandments are righteousness' (Psalm 119:172), and 'love is the fulfilling of the law' (Romans 13:10). Righteousness is love, and love is the light and the life of

God. The righteousness of God is embodied in Christ. We receive righteousness by receiving Him."—*Thoughts From the Mount of Blessing*, p. 18.

Because the gift of righteousness results in holiness or sanctification (Rom. 6:19, 22), we receive sanctification by receiving Christ. Sanctification is both present holiness in Christ (1 Cor. 6:11) and growth in holiness in Christ (1 Thess. 3:11—4:4). It is the work of the Holy Spirit in our hearts. (See 1 Peter 1:2; 2 Thess. 2:13; Rom. 15:16; *The Great Controversy*, p. 469.)

HAVE YOU REJECTED THE SINFUL PRACTICES OF YOUR OLD LIFE? How is this possible? By a simple prayer of total surrender, and a commitment to spend time with Him and His Word each day, allowing Him to feed your spiritual life.



FURTHER STUDY AND MEDITATION: Read *Thoughts From the Mount of Blessing*, pp. 18-21.

SUMMARY: The true Christian life begins with a radical rejection of one's former manner of life. When we are justified, we are crucified with Christ and are thus dead to sin. As Christ was raised from the dead so we are to rise to newness of life in Him. The experience of justification, the death of the old life of sin, involves the gift of Christ's righteousness.

"... and your old men
shall dream dreams."



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Jesus, the Only Answer

THIS WEEK'S STUDY: Romans 7.



MEMORY TEXT: "O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of this death? I thank God through Jesus Christ our Lord" (Romans 7:24, 25).

CHRIST SOLVES THE SIN PROBLEM. Although as believers in Christ we have died to sin and have been given freedom from condemnation and legalism, we retain fallen human natures with which we must battle. Only in Christ can we have victory over "this body of death" (Rom. 7:24, RSV).

OUTLINE:

- I. Married to Christ (Rom. 7:1-6).
- II. The Root of Our Problem—the Law or Sin (Rom. 7:7-13)?
- III. How Do We Resolve Our Inner Conflicts (Rom. 7:14-25)?

SAVED TWICE. When he was a child, Winston Churchill's parents took their children for a holiday in the country. With the other children Winston went swimming in a pool. He got into deep water and would have drowned if the son of the gardener had not jumped in and pulled him to safety.

Because the Churchills wanted to repay their son's rescuer in some way, they asked his parents what they could do. The boy's father said that his son wanted to go to the university and become a physician. The Churchills offered to pay his way through the medical program.

Years later, after the Teheran Conference, Churchill was dangerously ill with pneumonia. The king of England gave orders for the case to be put into the hands of the best doctor available. The doctor chosen was Dr. Fleming, the developer of penicillin, the same person who years before had saved Churchill from drowning.

Churchill gratefully remarked: "Rarely has one man owed his life twice to the same rescuer."

Christ rescues us from drowning in sin, and He also delivers us from the effects of sin by His healing grace. Let us be frank with ourselves; we owe our lives not once or twice but many times to the divine healing virtue of Jesus Christ. He saved us from the old life of habitual sinning, and when again we committed sin characteristic of the old way of life He forgave and delivered us. H. M. S. Richards, Sr., explained the infinite love of Jesus when he said, "The Lord gives a person a thousand chances." Thank God for His patience!

This lesson dramatizes our struggle with self and provides the only effective answer.

I. MARRIED TO CHRIST (Rom. 7:1-6).

1. Explain the illustration that Paul uses. Rom. 7:1-3.

Paul's primary purpose in Romans 7:1-3 is not to discuss in detail the laws regarding marriage and remarriage. Jesus taught that there is only one circumstance under which a previously married person may remarry while the former partner is still living. (See Matt. 5:32; 19:9.) "Nothing but the violation of the marriage bed can either break or annul the marriage vow. . . . God gave only one cause why a wife should leave her husband, or the husband leave his wife, which was adultery. Let this ground be prayerfully considered."—*The Adventist Home*, pp. 341, 342.

Paul was not contradicting Jesus. His concern (Rom. 7:1-6) was to use marriage, death, and remarriage as a sermon illustration. We were once held under the law of sin and death, married to a life of evil and condemned to death by God's holy law. Christ set us free from that "first husband," our old sinful way of life. Just as death releases the surviving partner from the marriage law, so our death to sin accomplished by Jesus Christ released us from the law's condemnation. We are free to belong to Jesus.

2. In Paul's application of his illustration who or what has died? Rom. 7:4-6.

Verse 4: "you have died" (RSV).

Verse 5: "While we were living in the flesh" (RSV).

Verse 6: "having died to that by which we were held fast" (Greek).

The law does not die. The law regarding marriage and remarriage represents the law of God as a whole; it is timeless. The first husband is not the law, but the sinful life lived by the individual who has not found Christ as the answer to his or her need. The first husband in Romans 7:1-6 is the "old man" of Romans 6:6. As pointed out in our last lesson, the old man of sin is our old manner of life, in which we habitually gave in to our fallen human natures. (See Eph. 4:22-24; Col. 3:1-10.)

We were "in the flesh." While the "old man" was still living we were "in the flesh" (Rom. 7:5). This does not mean merely that we were physical beings. It means that we were the victims of our sinful impulses—**not merely sexual impulses, but all our biases to evil.**

"Our sinful passions, aroused by the law, were at work in our members to bear fruit for death" (Rom. 7:5, RSV). Paul is not criticizing the law by suggesting that the law was responsible for our sinful passions. He is simply emphasizing the truth that in our passionate, unconverted, un-

justified state our knowledge of God's will only made us more determined to continue in our sin. The law condemned us to death because of our unwillingness to serve Christ, and our unbridled life of sin was leading us progressively to eternal destruction.

What held us captive? Because the old man of sin has now died, we are "dead to that which held us captive" (Rom. 7:6, RSV). In a primary sense, it was our sinful life that held us captive. In a secondary sense, the law held us captive because its divinely ordained function is to condemn the sinner to death. (See Rom. 3:19, 20; 1 Tim. 1:9.) When we were justified the old sinful self was put to death, and we were delivered from it. We were also delivered from the condemnation of the law. (See Rom. 8:1.)

3. Paul's illustration speaks of marriage to a second husband (Rom. 7:3). Who does the second husband represent? Rom. 7:4.

We "died to the law through the body of Christ" (Rom. 7:4, RSV). Christ bore our sins on the cross, so that "we, being dead to sins, should live unto righteousness: by whose stripes ye were healed" (1 Peter 2:24). Christ's death made possible our death to sin and our new life of righteousness in Him. When our old life of sin died (Rom. 6:6), we "put on the Lord Jesus Christ" (Rom. 13:14). We were married to Christ. (See Eph. 5:25-27; 2 Cor. 11:2.) He is the second husband of Romans 7:1-6. In the same way that a human marriage often results in offspring, our marriage to Christ leads us to "bear fruit for God" (Rom. 7:4, RSV; compare Matt. 3:8; John 15:16). The fruit represents the likeness to Himself that He gives us, as well as the results of our witnessing to others.

4. What does Paul mean when he says "that we should serve in newness of spirit, and not in the oldness of the letter" (Rom. 7:6)?

The same contrast is made elsewhere in Paul's writings. (See Rom. 2:29; 2 Cor. 3:6.) Paul never opposes the written will of God. He always upholds and extols it. (See Rom. 3:31; 7:7, 12, 14; 1 Tim. 1:8.) By "the letter" Paul does not mean the written will of God.

The term *letter* has a special meaning in Paul's writings. It refers to the attempt to obey the law apart from Christ. The Israelite who practiced outward circumcision in the absence of circumcision of the heart was serving in "the letter" (Rom. 2:29). The *letter* means the legalistic attempt to obey God's law apart from Christ. The message of 2 Corinthians chapter 3 is that this legalistic attempt is bound to failure. Legalism kills, but allowing Christ to live out His life through us, so that through His divine presence and power we are obedient to His law, is serving "in newness of spirit" (Rom. 7:6).

What does Paul's illustration mean to you? Have you replaced self with Christ? Are you conscious of being free from the condemnation

of the law? Are you set free from the attempt to obey without the presence of Christ in your life?



II. THE ROOT OF OUR PROBLEM—THE LAW OR SIN? (Rom. 7:7-13).

5. What question does Paul raise in Romans 7:7? How is it related to his statements about the law in verses 4-6?

Paul's teaching that we "have died to the law" (Rom. 7:4, RSV) and that "now we are discharged from the law" (Rom. 7:6, RSV) have led some to conclude that there is something wrong with the law. In modern times some have concluded that these statements indicate that the Ten Commandments are no longer binding for Christians. Paul foresaw this misunderstanding of his teaching. He asked, "Is the law sin?" (Rom. 7:7). In other words, "Is the law to be blamed for our previously lost condition?"

6. How do the following verses answer Paul's question? Rom. 7:7, 9, 10, 12-14.

Paul's answer is unequivocal. He says in effect: "There is nothing wrong with the law. It is holy and good. It does exactly what it was designed to do; it points out sin, condemns the sinner to death, and points him or her to Christ. I am the sinful one. My sin is the problem, not God's law."

The law drives the sinner to the Saviour. "The law and the gospel are in perfect harmony. Each upholds the other. In all its majesty the law confronts the conscience, causing the sinner to feel his need of Christ as the propitiation for sin. The gospel recognizes the power and immutability of the law. 'I had not known sin, but by the law,' Paul declares. The sense of sin, urged home by the law, drives the sinner to the Saviour. In his need man may present the mighty arguments furnished by the cross of Calvary. He may claim the righteousness of Christ; for it is imparted to every repentant sinner."—E. G. White Comments, *SDA Bible Commentary*, vol. 6, p. 1096.

7. How do you explain Paul's point that the law brings sin to life? Rom. 7:8-11.

"A sinner may often appear to be calm and tranquil, at peace with himself and the world, but when the law of God is brought home to his conscience, he not infrequently becomes irritated and even enraged. He spurns its authority, yet his conscience tells him it is right. . . .

“Sin revived. Literally, ‘sin came back to life.’ Paul does not mean that prior to the time ‘when the commandment came,’ sin—here personified as a loathsome creature—had been inactive in his life, but that he had not realized either its true nature or its fatal consequences (v. 13). In fact, sin had been unopposed in its control over his life (v. 5). But the coming of ‘the commandment’ challenged the presence of sin and its right to control his life. Sin now roused itself to maintain its disputed authority. In all its malignancy and strength it appeared in its true character—that of a deceiver, an enemy, and a murderer.”—*SDA Bible Commentary*, vol. 6, pp. 550, 551.

8. What conclusion does the apostle make regarding the law? Rom. 7:7, 12, 14, 16.

God Himself is described in Scripture as righteous, holy, just, and good. (See Matt. 19:17; Psalm 25:8.) Paul is able to exalt the law as holy, just, and good because it is a transcript of God’s character. Romans 7 exalts the law as the great standard of righteousness. The question Paul addresses is, “How can a life like mine, so vacillating and out of harmony with God’s perfect law, ever be brought to the state of righteousness that God requires?”

The law an expression of God’s righteousness. “The law of God is as holy as He is holy, as perfect as He is perfect. It presents to men the righteousness of God. . . . The disciples of Christ must obtain righteousness of a different character from that of the Pharisees, if they would enter the kingdom of heaven. *God offered them, in His Son, the perfect righteousness of the law. If they would open their hearts fully to receive Christ, then the very life of God, His love, would dwell in them, transforming them into His own likeness; and thus through God’s free gift they would possess the righteousness which the law requires.*”—*Thoughts From the Mount of Blessing*, pp. 54, 55. (Italics supplied.)

Can you say that you love God’s law since you have found Christ as your Saviour from sin? How can you love a righteous standard of behavior that once was objectionable to you?



III. HOW DO WE RESOLVE OUR INNER CONFLICTS? (Rom. 7:14-25).

9. What does Paul mean when he says, “I am carnal, sold under sin” (Rom. 7:14)?

The Greek word translated *carnal* in this verse may mean “fleshly,” in the sense of “made of flesh,” or “earthly.” (Compare 2 Cor. 3:3; Heb. 7:16.) It also may mean “fleshly,” in the sense of “a weak, sinning, human being.” Obviously Paul used the word in the latter sense. He con-

trasts his carnal nature with the spiritual nature of the law of God. (Compare 1 Cor. 3:1-3.)

Whatever part of his life's experience he is describing, we do not have any difficulty identifying with him. We have often recognized the spirituality of the law at times when we were having no success in keeping it.

10. How did Paul's carnal condition manifest itself? Rom. 7:15-19.

11. Paul says that he knew that the law is good, and he chose to obey it (Rom. 7:16, 18). Why were his attempts unsuccessful?

Consider the dilemma Paul describes and recall your own experience. He was "carnal, sold under sin" (Rom. 7:14). He could not do the good things that he chose to do (Rom. 7:15, 18, 19). He knew that nothing good dwelt in him (Rom. 7:18). He did not excuse himself when he said, "It is no longer I that do it" (Rom. 7:17, 20, RSV). Part of him chose not to sin, and another part could not resist it.



12. What two laws were fighting for the mastery in Paul's life? Rom. 7:21-23.

Paul was convinced intellectually that God's law was right, but, because of the weakness of his fallen humanity, he could not obey God.

13. To which phase of human experience is Romans 7:14-23 referring?

Suggested answers:

a. To the experience of the person who is serving in "the oldness of the letter" (Rom. 7:6). This person is aware of the perfection of God's law, but is unable to obey it because the "old man" of sin is not yet dead. Because the first husband, the old life of habitual sinning, is still reigning, the second Husband, Christ, cannot reign within. The result is that the life is out of harmony with God's law. (See *Steps to Christ*, p. 19.)

b. To the experience of the person who has experienced the new birth (justification) but who temporarily strays from his relationship with Christ. Paul saw this danger when he said that, by the grace of Christ, he kept his fallen humanity under control, "lest . . . when I have preached to others, I myself should be a castaway" (1 Cor. 9:27). (See *Steps to Christ*, p. 64.)

14. What is the only effective answer to the conflict that Paul describes? Rom. 7:24, 25 (compare Gal. 5:16-18).

“The less we see to esteem in ourselves, the more we shall see to esteem in the infinite purity and loveliness of our Saviour. A view of our sinfulness drives us to Him who can pardon; and when the soul, realizing its helplessness, reaches out after Christ, He will reveal Himself in power.”—*Steps to Christ*, p. 65.

DO I REFLECT THE IMAGE OF CHRIST? Have you discovered that, even though you regularly renew your commitment to Christ, at times you lapse into sins that you hate? Can you analyze why? Is it for one of the following reasons?

- There are some sins that I do not wish to give up.
- I do not pray and read God’s Word every day.
- I do not choose Christ at the moment of temptation.
- I depend too much on my own strength of will.
- When I pray for victory, I neglect to claim it by faith and thank the Lord for it.



FURTHER STUDY AND MEDITATION: Read *Steps to Christ*, pp. 47, 48, 57-65.

SUMMARY: Through the saving death of Christ we can be freed from the bondage of sin and live in union with Christ. As a result of this union we will bear fruit for God. The law of God, the great standard of righteousness, reveals our sin and points us to Christ. Only through His power can we live in harmony with the perfect principles of His law.

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**"Even a child is known
by his doings . . ."**

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The New Life in Christ

THIS WEEK'S STUDY: Romans 8.



MEMORY TEXT: "But ye are not in the flesh, but in the Spirit, if so be that the Spirit of God dwell in you. Now if any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his. And if Christ be in you, the body is dead because of sin; but the Spirit is life because of righteousness" (Romans 8:9, 10).

POWER FOR VICTORIOUS CHRISTIAN LIVING. When Christ dwells in the heart of the believer by the Holy Spirit, He provides the necessary power to overcome sin and to live fully in harmony with the will of God.

OUTLINE:

- I. No Condemnation (Rom. 8:1-4).
- II. Divine Indwelling (Rom. 8:5-11).
- III. Children of God (Rom. 8:12-17).
- IV. The Future Glory (Rom. 8:18-39).

BLESSINGS COME WITH THE SON. A wealthy man who possessed vast art treasures died of a broken heart after the untimely death of his teenage son. The father's will stipulated that his art holdings were to be sold at auction. The will also stated that an oil painting of his son was to be the first item offered for sale by the auctioneer.

When the auction began it seemed that no one in the large crowd cared to purchase the painting of the boy. It took several minutes before anyone began to bid. Then an old servant of the wealthy man, who had always loved the boy, stepped forward and bid seventy-five cents for the painting. Because there were no other bids, the picture of the boy was sold to the servant.

Then came a dramatic pause in proceedings. The sale was stopped as the rich man's will was read. The will provided that whoever loved the son enough to buy his portrait should receive all of the contents of the father's house, including the extensive art collection.

When your love for the Son of God transcends all other loves, "all things are yours; whether . . . the world, or life, or death, or things present, or things to come; all are yours; and ye are Christ's; and Christ is God's" (1 Cor. 3:21-23). The enormous spiritual riches that are ours when we have Christ are the subject of Romans.

This lesson discusses the unsurpassed gift that becomes ours when we allow Christ to dwell in our hearts by the Holy Spirit.

I. NO CONDEMNATION (Rom. 8:1-4).

1. Why is there freedom from condemnation for those who know Christ? 1 John 2:2 (compare John 3:18; Eph. 1:7, 8).

Because Jesus bore our sins on the cross, He is able to forgive and cleanse us. But there are a few conditions:

- a. We must believe in Him as Saviour and Lord (Rom. 1:16).
- b. We must be willing to confess our sins (1 John 1:9).
- c. We must be willing to "walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit" (Rom. 8:1).

"No condemnation" means justification, including deliverance from "the body of this death" (Rom. 7:24); that is, from the dominion of sin and the doom to which the body of flesh is subject. Jesus Christ is the power that brings forth the "new man," when the "old man" of sin is put to death (justification). In a very real sense Jesus Christ is the new Man who controls the justified believer's life. His indwelling in the forgiven heart brings healing from the ravages of guilt, freedom from the condemnation of the law.

Two key words: flesh and Spirit. The two words, *flesh* and *Spirit*, occur again and again in Romans 8. When Paul uses the word *flesh* he means human nature in all its weakness and vulnerability to sin. He means sinful human nature apart from Christ, everything that attaches a person to the world instead of to God. Galatians 5:19-21 lists some of the works of the flesh. All the sins that Satan and his demons lead a person to commit come under the heading of works of the "flesh."

The word *Spirit* occurs some twenty times in Romans 8. Life in the Spirit is life indwelt and controlled by the Holy Spirit. When the Spirit is reigning the "flesh" cannot reign. Life in the Spirit is the answer to the terrible conflict Paul describes in Romans 7. When the Spirit reigns in the life the believer is no longer "carnal, sold under sin" (Rom. 7:14). He retains fallen human nature with its propensities to sin. But with the Spirit in control he is a spiritual person who has "the mind of Christ" (1 Cor. 2:16; compare verses 12-16; Col. 3:9, 10).

2. What law set Paul free from the "law of sin and death"? Rom. 8:2 (compare Rom. 7:23).

The "law of sin and death" is not the Ten Commandments. It is the "law in my members" (Rom. 7:23), the carnal nature that controls when I am not controlled by the Spirit of Christ. "Thus the law of the Spirit of life works directly contrary to the law of sin and death in the members, empowering the believer to overcome sin's destroying influence and freeing him from sin's bondage and condemnation."—*SDA Bible Commentary*, vol. 6, p. 560.

- MON** 3. What law is referred to in Romans 8:3, 4? What does Christ do for us that the law could not do?

The "law of sin and death" (Rom. 8:2) is not the "law" of verses 3 and 4. The law in verses 3 and 4 is the same law spoken of in Romans 7:7, 12, 14, 22. It is the expressed will of God summarized in the Ten Commandments and spelled out in detail throughout the Scriptures.

The law could save no one, because saving is not its function. Instead, it is a standard of righteousness (Rom. 3:20; Gal. 2:16), pointing out sin and directing the sinner to Christ. A person who has broken God's law can never be saved by personal efforts to obey in the future. Past guilt can never be erased by future obedience.

Only as guilt is atoned for can we have salvation. Christ atoned for our guilt on Calvary (Rom. 5:8) in order that those who accept Him can be forgiven and purified (Rom. 5:17). Christ died "in order that the righteous requirements of the law might be fully met in us, who do not live according to the sinful nature but according to the Spirit" (Rom. 8:4, NIV).

4. What experience brings a person into harmony with God's law? Rom. 8:4 (compare John 3:5, 20, 21).

"In the new birth [justification] the heart is brought into harmony with God, as it is brought into accord with His law. When this mighty change has taken place in the sinner, he has passed from death unto life, from sin unto holiness, from transgression and rebellion to obedience and loyalty. The old life of alienation from God has ended; the new life of reconciliation, of faith and love, has begun. Then 'the righteousness of the law' will 'be fulfilled in us, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit.' Romans 8:4. And the language of the soul will be: 'O how love I Thy law! it is my meditation all the day.' Psalm 119:97."—*The Great Controversy*, p. 468.

What evidences do you have that you are consistently enjoying the new life in the Spirit?

TUE II. DIVINE INDWELLING (Rom. 8:5-11).

5. In the light of our study so far, how would you explain the following phrases used in Romans 8:5-8?

Verse 5: "after the flesh" _____

Verse 5: "after the Spirit" _____

Verse 6: "carnally minded" _____

Verse 6: "spiritually minded" _____

6. How does the Lord deliver us from life "in the flesh"? How are carnal people made righteous? Rom. 8:9-11.

These verses are the heart of the book of Romans. Indeed, they express the very heart of the gospel. Because Christ has died for our sins, risen from the dead, and is now ministering for us, we can have the gift of His righteousness. This gift is what Paul means by justification. (See Rom. 3:20-22.)

"Make sure that you are accepted by Christ because you rely on the merits of a crucified and risen Saviour. His righteousness must be your righteousness. He wrought it out for you, and when you receive it you stand justified in the presence of God."—*Medical Ministry*, p. 115.

How we are qualified for heaven. Paul tells us how our lives are transformed. Justification by faith includes the new birth by faith. When we accept Christ as Saviour, His Spirit is bestowed upon us and we are made "partakers of the divine nature" (2 Peter 1:4). The Spirit within is Christ within, and He brings righteousness to our lives. Jesus promised, "I will come to you" (John 14:18). He comes by the Holy Spirit and qualifies us for eternal life with Himself. (See Matt. 25:46; Heb. 12:14.) His righteousness becomes our righteousness. He does not give us some intangible quality, nor does He make us independently righteous. Christ is our righteousness, in our hearts. His divine presence is our righteousness and this alone qualifies us for heaven. (Compare 1 Cor. 1:30; Phil. 3:8-11.)

The beginning of eternal life. "Those who see Christ in His true character, and receive Him into the heart, have everlasting life. It is through the Spirit that Christ dwells in us; and the Spirit of God, received into the heart by faith, is the beginning of life eternal."—*The Desire of Ages*, p. 388.

"Christ alone can help us and give us the victory. Christ must be all in all to us, He must dwell in the heart, His life must circulate through us as the blood circulates through the veins. His Spirit must be a vitalizing power that will cause us to influence others to become Christlike and holy."—Ellen G. White Comments, *SDA Bible Commentary*, vol. 5, p. 1144.

If we do not have the Spirit of Christ, we do not belong to Him (Rom. 8:9). Can you think of times when your thoughts or activities

exclude the Holy Spirit from your life? How can we always be assured of having His presence in our hearts?

WED

III. CHILDREN OF GOD (Rom. 8:12-17).

7. How do you explain Paul's statement that as believers we are "debtors" (KJV) or under "obligation" (NIV)? Rom. 8:12, 13.

Christian believers are not spiritual jellyfish. The Lord expects us to make decisions, to exercise our power of choice. "You cannot change your heart, you cannot of yourself give to God its affections; but you can *choose* to serve Him. You can give Him your will; He will then work in you to will and to do according to His good pleasure. Thus your whole nature will be brought under the control of the Spirit of Christ; your affections will be centered upon Him, your thoughts will be in harmony with Him."—*Steps to Christ*, p. 47.

8. What are the practical implications of our adoption as sons and daughters of God? Rom. 8:14-17.

How would you convince a person who had been deprived of parental love and understanding that God loves him or her infinitely and is a merciful Father?

IV. THE FUTURE GLORY (Rom. 8:18-39).

9. Why are hardships and trials endurable for the justified believer in Jesus Christ? Rom. 8:18-25.

Not only is the trusting Christian delivered from the dominion of sin. He also has the hope of a glorious future with Christ for eternity. The person who chooses to live in the "flesh" has neither blessing. The Christian regards his trials and sorrows as minute compared to the joy of ultimate deliverance from a world of sin and from the bondage of fallen human nature.

Three groanings for final redemption.

- a. The whole creation groans (Rom. 8:22).
- b. Those of us who have been born anew by the Holy Spirit groan within ourselves as we long for the finishing touch of immortality (Rom. 8:23).
- c. "The Spirit itself maketh intercession for us with groanings which cannot be uttered" (Rom. 8:26). The Holy Spirit Himself suffers with His people as He eagerly looks for the day of their ultimate deliverance.

10. How does the Holy Spirit assist us in expressing our longings to God? Rom. 8:26, 27.

“Christ, our Mediator, and the Holy Spirit are constantly interceding in man’s behalf, but the Spirit pleads not for us as does Christ who presents His blood, shed from the foundation of the world; the Spirit works upon our hearts, drawing out prayers and penitence, praise and thanksgiving. The gratitude which flows from our lips is the result of the Spirit striking the cords of the soul in holy memories, awakening the music of the heart.”—Ellen G. White Comments, *SDA Bible Commentary*, vol. 6, pp. 1077, 1078.

11. What did Paul mean when he said that “all things work together for good to them that love God” (Rom. 8:28)?

A moment’s thought reveals that not only good things happen to trusting Christians. Stephen was stoned, Paul was beheaded, Peter was crucified upside down, John was thrown into a caldron of boiling oil, pulled out unharmed, but then exiled to Patmos. The history of the Christian church is full of stories about the intense sufferings of God’s people. In every age many Christians have endured persecution of one form or another.

Christian believers get sick and die as do people generally. They suffer from accidents, calamities, criticism, victimization, and alienation just like anyone else.

Then what does Romans 8:28 mean? It means that, for the one who loves Him, God overrules the evil that Satan and wicked men cause. Just as God brought good out of evil in the experience of Joseph, so He does for all His children. (See Gen. 45:7, 8; 50:20.) Only in eternity will we fully understand why suffering was permitted. Then we will see with undimmed vision that the sorrows God allowed had a purpose, and that His merciful providence brought good out of those experiences that Satan employed to destroy us.

12. In what sense does God predetermine events in the lives of those who are saved by grace? Rom. 8:29, 30.

God foresees all that will happen to us. His predestination is based on His foreknowledge. He foresaw that we would choose Christ when He would draw us, with all humanity, to Himself. (See John 12:32.) His plan for our lives operates from the moment of our justification to the time of ultimate glorification. We share His glory of character now as we receive the Holy Spirit (John 17:10, 22; Rom. 8:10). At His coming His glory will be completely revealed in us (Rom. 8:18).

13. Read Paul's matchless expression of faith in Christ (Rom. 8:31-39). Note his confidence in the spiritual victory the Lord gives us in the here and now, as well as his absolute assurance that what Christ promises for the future will be completely fulfilled.

God is not opposed to us; He is "for us" (Rom. 8:31). The devil is the accuser (Rev. 12:10); God is the loving Saviour of those who accept the infinite gift of His Son.

"You who feel the most unworthy, fear not to commit your case to God. When He gave Himself in Christ for the sin of the world, He undertook the case of every soul. 'He that spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all, how shall he not with him also freely give us all things?' Rom. 8:32. Will He not fulfill the gracious word given for our encouragement and strength?"—*Christ's Object Lessons*, p. 174.

PRACTICAL APPLICATION TO LIFE: How much assistance do you expect from the Holy Spirit in the battle of life? What do you expect Him to do for you tomorrow?

What do you expect the Holy Spirit will do for you in the greatest crisis of your life?

(F.S.)

FURTHER STUDY AND MEDITATION: Review the major points in Paul's epistle from Romans chapter 1 through chapter 8. What has Paul said? How does his eloquent praise at the end of chapter 8 (verses 31-39) relate to the overall message of the epistle so far? What does justification have to do with suffering? Why does justification provide us with the kind of confidence in Christ that Paul expresses?

SUMMARY: Guided by the indwelling Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, believers in Christ are able to overcome the controlling power of sin. Despite suffering, they will be able to enjoy life to its fullest now, and in eternity will have ultimate joy as sons and daughters of God.

Who Are God's People?

THIS WEEK'S STUDY: Romans 9, 10.



MEMORY TEXT: "For with the heart man believeth unto righteousness; and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation" (Romans 10:10).

FAITH IN SALVATION BY GRACE ALONE. To be one of God's chosen children, saved by grace alone, it is necessary to exercise faith in Jesus Christ. The believer will manifest his faith by sharing it with others.

OUTLINE:

- I. Paul's Sorrow for Israel (Rom. 9:1-5).
- II. The Chosen Are the Faithful (Rom. 9:6-29).
- III. Righteousness for Those Who Believe (Rom. 9:30—10:21).

THE PROBLEM OF PREDESTINATION. Many Bible interpreters have used Romans chapter 9 as the basis for their doctrine of double predestination. This is the teaching that in the eternal ages before Creation God decreed that some would be saved and others lost; that the elect will inevitably be saved and the damned will inevitably be lost. According to this teaching, there is nothing that either group can do to change the divine decree regarding their future.

This teaching first became a serious issue in the Christian church in the time of Augustin  (A.D. 354-430), the famous bishop of Hippo Regius in North Africa. Augustine taught that God gives His grace to the elect alone, to those whom He arbitrarily decides should receive His unmerited favor. God's grace given to the elect is irresistible; hence, they are sure to be saved. He said that those who are not so chosen by God are left in their sin and will justly receive eternal damnation.

In the sixteenth century, Luther and Calvin substantially accepted Augustine's teaching on predestination. Since then Calvinistic predestination in one form or another has been very influential in many Protestant churches.

Jacobus Arminius (1560-1609), the celebrated Dutch Reformed theologian, strenuously opposed the earlier Reformers' doctrine of predestination. He taught that God *foresaw* who would receive Christ and who would not. Each individual has been given the power to choose or to reject Christ. Those whom God foresaw would choose Christ as Saviour were predestined to salvation. Those whom He foresaw would reject Christ were destined to eternal death. God's saving grace and righteousness are given

to those who choose to believe, and it is kept from those who choose not to believe.

On this question, Seventh-day Adventists are Arminian. Because the issue is a current one in our world today, it is essential to understand Paul's message in Romans chapter 9.

SUN

I. PAUL'S SORROW FOR ISRAEL (Rom. 9:1-5).

1. What sacrifice was Paul prepared to make for his countrymen? Rom. 9:1-3.

Paul's concern for the salvation of his Israelite brethren and sisters was based on his knowledge of the spiritual barrenness of legalistic Judaism. So intense was Paul's burden for the Jews that he would have been willing to be alienated from Christ if only they could come to faith in Christ. His love for them and desire to introduce them to Jesus was as earnest as was Moses' love for Israel after the Israelites had apostatized at Sinai. (See Ex. 32:31, 32.) Of course, the Lord would not punish Moses for the sin of the people (verse 33). Nor would He punish Paul with eternal rejection because of the sin of Israel in his day.

2. What special blessings and responsibilities had been given to Israel? Rom. 9:4, 5.

The Jews claimed the covenant promises given to Abraham. They would become a great nation (Gen. 17:2, 4). They would inherit all the land of Canaan (verse 8). The Messiah would be one of Abraham's descendants (Gen. 12:3).

They also claimed the promises given to Moses. (See Deut. 6:10-12; 28:1-13.) God had chosen them to be His witnesses before the nations of earth. If faithful, they would be the leading nation on earth, superior spiritually, materially, physically, and culturally. Their law came directly from God, the sanctuary and its services comprised a system of worship far superior to that of other nations, and the divine assurance of national greatness was accepted by them as unconditional certainty.

Paul was aware of the divine plan for Israel, but he recognized that because they had rejected Christ there had been a change of their status as a chosen nation. (See Gal. 3:27-29; compare Matt. 21:43.)

II. THE CHOSEN ARE THE FAITHFUL (Rom. 9:6-29).

3. How does Paul identify the true Israel of God? Rom. 9:6-9.

These verses state the theme of the entire chapter. Isaac is used as an illustration of the true Israel of God. Because he was a child of promise,

whom Abraham had believed would be conceived and born in fulfillment of God's prediction, Isaac represents all those, whether Jews or Gentiles, who live by faith in Jesus Christ. Paul's message in Romans is that salvation is by faith, not by works of law. Those who, like Abraham, accept righteousness and salvation by faith, rather than by works, are counted as true descendants of Abraham, no matter what their nationality. (Compare Rom. 4:9-12, 23-25; Gal. 3:6-9, 14.) Those who have faith in Christ are the true Israel of God.

God's statement to Abraham, "Through Isaac shall your descendants be named" (Rom. 9:7, RSV), did not mean that God had chosen Isaac for salvation and Ishmael for damnation. God gave special promises to Abraham regarding Ishmael. "As for Ishmael, I have heard you; behold, I will bless him and make him fruitful and multiply him exceedingly; he shall be the father of twelve princes, and I will make him a great nation" (Gen. 17:20, RSV).

4. How does Paul illustrate "the purpose of God according to election"? What explanation would you give of Paul's illustration? Rom. 9:10-13.

Paul is illustrating salvation by faith through grace in contrast with salvation by works. Like Isaac, Jacob is used as the symbol of those who are saved by grace, not by their own works. And Esau is the symbol of those who are rejected by God because they do not exercise faith. Paul is not making the point that God arbitrarily gave salvation to Jacob and denied it to Esau.


None need perish. "There was no arbitrary choice on the part of God, by which Esau was shut out from the blessings of salvation. The gifts of His grace through Christ are free to all. There is no election but one's own by which any may perish. God has set forth in His word the conditions upon which every soul will be elected to eternal life—obedience to His commandments, through faith in Christ. God has elected a character in harmony with His law, and anyone who shall reach the standard of His requirement, will have an entrance into the kingdom of glory."—*Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 207.

Jacob was chosen because of faith. The statement at the birth of the boys, "The elder shall serve the younger" (Gen. 25:23), meant that God had chosen Jacob to have the spiritual birthright, to be the patriarch of the family. In the future both brothers would be guilty of serious sins. (See Gen. 25:27-34; 27:1-41.) Jacob repented and, by faith, accepted God's salvation. Esau persisted in his rebellious way of life.

Jacob was not chosen by God because of his future good works, but because the Lord foresaw that he would be a genuine believer who would receive the free gift of grace. (Compare Rom. 8:29.) Esau was rejected because God foresaw that he would not choose to receive divine saving grace. God offered both men salvation. (Compare Isaiah 45:22.) One responded to the invitation, the other did not.

The passage does not teach that God's choice of Jacob was independent of Jacob's choice of grace. It teaches that God's predestination was independent of Jacob's good works (Rom. 9:11). Faith is not a work that saves us; it is a response to divine grace. (See Rom. 5:17.)

God did not "hate" Esau (Rom. 9:13) in the modern sense of the term. The Greek word, like its Hebrew equivalent, is used in the sense of "to love less," or "to put to one side." Jesus used the word in this way. (See Luke 14:26; John 12:25.)

-  5. How would you explain Paul's second illustration of election (God's choice)? Rom. 9:14-18.

Pharaoh could have believed. God chooses to have mercy on those who have faith in Christ. (Compare Rom. 9:14-16 with verse 30.) The reference to Pharaoh is interpreted by some to mean that God deliberately hardened Pharaoh's heart because he was predestined to be lost. Not so! Pharaoh chose not to accept God's warnings and believe. God is said to have hardened Pharaoh's heart (Ex. 4:21; 7:3; 8:15). But it is also said that Pharaoh hardened his own heart (Ex. 8:32; 9:34; 1 Sam. 6:6).

The paradox is explained by two facts: (a) In Scripture God is often said to cause that which He allows. The real cause is the evil one. (b) God's loving appeals will soften one heart and increasingly harden another, because one will choose to accept Him and another will not. The sun that hardens putty will melt butter. Appeals rejected result in a gradually deeper alienation from the Lord.

God's purpose was certain to be fulfilled. Romans 9:17 quotes Exodus 9:16. God said that He had raised up Pharaoh "for to shew in thee my power; and that my name may be declared throughout all the earth." In context, God's statement is part of His rebuke for Pharaoh's unwillingness to respond to His appeals. God's purpose would have been fulfilled no matter how Pharaoh had reacted to His appeals. If Pharaoh had responded positively God's name would have been exalted in the earth. But when Pharaoh chose to reject God, he was destroyed and the Lord's name still was exalted.

There is no suggestion in the passage that because Pharaoh was predestined to be lost, he had no choice but to react negatively to God's appeals. God wills to have mercy upon believers, and wills to reject unbelievers. (Compare Rom. 9:18 with Rom. 4:16.)

6. What point was Paul illustrating by the example of the potter and the clay? Rom. 9:19-24.

The Lord takes the unformed "clay" of the repenting, believing sinner and molds it into the image of Christ. The transformation is God's work of grace, not the result of any human endeavor. Those said to be chosen for wrath are those who, like the ancient Israelites, seek righteousness by

works instead of by faith. Those said to be chosen for mercy are those who, like the believing Gentiles, attain to righteousness through faith.

Romans 9:30-33 provides the summary of the entire discussion. The elect are those who have faith in Christ; the damned are those who do not have faith.

7. Why did God turn to the Gentiles? Why will only a remnant of Israel be saved? Rom. 9:25-29.

The tragedy is that only a remnant of Israel turned to the Lord in faith. Only a remnant will accept Jesus Christ as Lord and Saviour. However, Gentiles should not feel self-righteous. Only a remnant of them will be saved (Rev. 12:17), because only a remnant have the faith that leads to obedience to the Lord's will.

WED

III. RIGHTEOUSNESS FOR THOSE WHO BELIEVE (Rom. 9:30-10:21).

8. How is righteousness received? Why did many in Israel not attain to it? Rom. 9:30-33.

God's grace makes it possible for us to exercise faith in Jesus Christ. When we accept Christ, God gives us the gift of righteousness through the Holy Spirit (Rom. 8:9, 10). This is justification. The Gentiles "attained to" righteousness because they did not rely on their own works; they believed in the saving mercy of Christ. The verb *attained* translates the Greek word that means "to seize, to win, to make one's own, to grasp." The Gentiles grasped Christ's righteousness by faith. His righteousness became theirs because they invited Him to reign in their hearts.

Grasp Christ's righteousness by faith. "In order to meet the requirements of the law, our faith must grasp the righteousness of Christ, accepting it as our righteousness. Through union with Christ, through acceptance of His righteousness by faith, we may be qualified to work the works of God, to be collaborators with Christ."—*Selected Messages*, book 1, p. 374.

9. What is the meaning of Romans 10:4 in its context?

The Greek text translates literally: "For Christ is the end of the law unto righteousness to everyone who believes." The word translated *end* may mean "goal." Therefore some interpreters have concluded that the text means that Christ is the goal to whom the law points.

The word *end* may also mean "termination" or "cessation." If we understand the word this way, the passage means that, for those who believe, Christ is the termination of the use of the law as a means of righteousness.

This meaning fits the context exactly. The burden of Paul's message in Romans 9 and 10 is that, because his Israelite brethren and sisters failed to believe in Christ, they failed to grasp His righteousness. "Being ignorant of the righteousness that comes from God, and seeking to establish their own, they did not submit to God's righteousness" (Rom. 10:3, RSV). Christ is the end of the attempt to establish one's own righteousness. When He is taken into the heart through the indwelling of the Holy Spirit, the believer has righteousness because he or she has His righteous presence.

10. How does Paul define righteousness by faith? Rom. 10:5-8.

A person who has never sinned could be regarded as righteous on the basis of law (Rom. 10:5). But "all have sinned" (Rom. 3:23). Therefore we cannot become righteous by our works. We are totally dependent upon Christ to restore us to the image of His holiness. How does He do that?

Paul has already spoken of the gift of righteousness by the Holy Spirit (Rom. 8:9, 10). He has spoken of repentant, believing sinners being brought into conformity with God's righteous law (Rom. 8:3, 4). Now he gives us a further glimpse into the way God restores us spiritually. *He defines righteousness by faith as the writing of the law on the heart of the believer.*

Paul quotes Deuteronomy 30:11-14. In that passage, the word that is written on the heart refers to the commandments of God. Putting Paul's emphases in Romans 3 and 8 together with this new emphasis in Romans 10, we conclude that when the Holy Spirit comes into our hearts He brings us into complete accord with the holy law of God. The writing of the law on our hearts is Christ's bestowal of Himself upon us by the Holy Spirit.

11. How are we saved? Rom. 10:9-11 (compare Titus 3:5-7; Eph. 2:8-10).



In case the reader has forgotten, Paul restates the point. Faith is the means of salvation because it is a response to God's free grace. The Revised Standard Version translates Romans 10:10: "For man believes with his heart and so is justified." The Greek translates literally: "For he believes in his heart unto righteousness." Faith in Christ results in righteousness of heart. As Paul has already said, faith in Christ results in the law's being written on the heart. Righteousness of heart is perfect conformity to the will of God as expressed in His law. Salvation (justification) is the gift of the righteousness of Christ to the heart of the believer.

12. To whom does God's method of salvation apply? Rom. 10:12, 13.

What Paul says here provides the answer to Augustine's and Calvin's view of predestination. All may respond, all may come, all have access to

grace through Jesus Christ, all have the offer of salvation, all may be justified by faith. Salvation is not limited to a favored few whom the Calvinists call the elect. To Paul the elect are all who exercise their free capacity to choose by accepting Christ as Saviour and Lord. (Compare John 1:7, 9, 12; 12:32; Matt. 11:28-30.)

13. To what extent had the Lord warned Israel of the results of their unbelief? Rom. 10:14-21.

The "preacher" spoken of in Romans 10:14 is every believer in Jesus Christ. Only as we spread the message of Christ's saving love will the world hear and believe. Many who hear will refuse to believe (verse 16). Nevertheless we are as much in debt to others as Paul was to the Romans. (See Rom. 1:14, 15.)

Israel learned of Christ's love and yet refused Him. They refused to witness for Him because they rejected His righteousness. May the Lord grant modern spiritual Israel the conviction and grace to believe and serve Him in a way that our ancient counterparts failed to do!

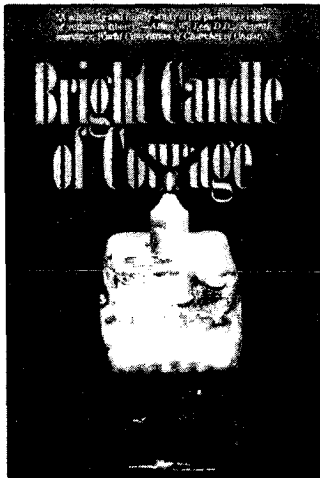
ARE YOU IMPARTING THAT WHICH YOU HAVE RECEIVED?

Reception of Christ's righteousness involves great responsibility to others. Are you sharing your spiritual blessings? What do you plan to do this coming week to bring Christ's love and salvation to someone else?



FURTHER STUDY AND MEDITATION: Compare Romans 10:6-10 with Romans 3:19-24; 6:17-19; 8:3, 4, 9, 10; Galatians 2:16, 20; 3:1-9.

SUMMARY: In Romans 9 and 10 Paul explains that all who have faith in Jesus Christ are the elect of God. All have the capacity to choose. Faith and salvation are available to all who are willing to choose Christ. His righteousness given freely to those who believe is the means of their salvation.



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Salvation for Israel

THIS WEEK'S STUDY: Romans 11.

SAB **PM** **MEMORY TEXT:** "For if God spared not the natural branches, take heed lest he also spare not thee" (Romans 11:21).

GOD SAVES ALL NATIONALITIES. Israelites who lacked faith were rejected by God. Gentiles who believed were accepted. All who believe, whether Jew or Gentile, will be given eternal life.

OUTLINE:

- I. A Chosen Remnant (Rom. 11:1-10).
- II. The Gospel for Jews and Gentiles (Rom. 11:11-16).
- III. Grafted Branches (Rom. 11:17-24).
- IV. God's Gifts and Call Irrevocable (Rom. 11:25-36).

COMPASSION FOR THE JEWS. If Christians throughout history had shown the same compassion for Jews as that manifested by Jesus and the apostle Paul many more would have been attracted to the Christian gospel. Paul wept over them, and earnestly appealed to them to accept Christ.

One of the ugliest phenomena in history is that of some professed Christians persecuting Jews, sometimes justifying themselves on the basis of the Jews' rejection and crucifixion of Jesus. The real truth is that every one of us is responsible for the death of Jesus. Our waywardness caused His suffering; our sins broke His heart.

How easy it is to assume that we are saved and others who do not believe as we do are lost! Fortunately only God is able to judge whether saving faith exists in a human heart. We are even told that some who have never heard or understood the gospel will be saved by virtue of Christ's death because they have lived up to the light the Holy Spirit has given them. (See Rom. 2:11-16.)

When we get to heaven, perhaps we will be surprised at the remarkable number of apparently unlikely people our loving Saviour has judged worthy to share the joys of the eternal kingdom.

I dreamed death came the other night: and heaven's gates swung wide.
With kindly grace an angel ushered me inside.
And there, to my astonishment, stood folks I'd known on earth.
Some I'd judged and labeled unfit or of little worth.
Indignant words rose to my lips, but never were set free;
For every face showed stunned surprise.
No one expected me!—C. R. Hembree.

SUN

I. A CHOSEN REMNANT (Rom. 11:1-10).

1. What evidence does Paul give that salvation is still available for Israelites? Rom. 11:1, 2 (compare verse 15).

Because they rejected the Messiah, Israel was rejected as the chosen nation to take the gospel to the world. But individual Jews still have equal opportunity with all other people to believe in Jesus Christ and accept His offered salvation. (Compare Matt. 21:43; Luke 20:16; Acts 6:7.) Almost all the earliest Christians were converted Jews.

Many Jews will receive Jesus. "I saw that God had forsaken the Jews as a nation; but that individuals among them will yet be converted and be enabled to tear the veil from their hearts and see that the prophecy concerning them has been fulfilled; they will receive Jesus as the Saviour of the world and see the great sin of their nation in rejecting and crucifying Him."—*Early Writings*, p. 213.

"Notwithstanding the awful doom pronounced upon the Jews as a nation at the time of their rejection of Jesus of Nazareth, there have lived from age to age many noble, God-fearing Jewish men and women who have suffered in silence. God has comforted their hearts in affliction and has beheld with pity their terrible situation. He has heard the agonizing prayers of those who have sought Him with all the heart for a right understanding of His word. Some have learned to see in the lowly Nazarene whom their forefathers rejected and crucified, the true Messiah of Israel. As their minds have grasped the significance of the familiar prophecies so long obscured by tradition and misinterpretation, their hearts have been filled with gratitude to God for the unspeakable gift He bestows upon every human being who chooses to accept Christ as a personal Saviour."—*The Acts of the Apostles*, pp. 379, 380.

2. On what basis will a remnant among the Jews be saved? Rom. 11:3-6.

Salvation is by grace through faith to all humanity. (See John 3:16; Rom. 3:20-24.) The "remnant according to the election of grace" (Rom. 11:5) are those upon whom God chooses to bestow His saving grace. They respond to His work of grace upon their hearts, the conviction of the Holy Spirit. Saving grace is given to those who choose to believe in Jesus Christ. Gentiles who receive righteousness by faith are among those chosen by grace. (See Rom. 9:30.) Israelites can have the same experience of righteousness if they believe in Christ. (See Rom. 9:31—10:10.) Any Jew who believes joins the "remnant chosen by grace" (Rom. 11:5, NIV).

3. Who are the "elect" mentioned in Romans 11:7?

Whether Jew or Gentile, an elect (chosen) person is one whom God foresaw would respond to His grace by accepting Jesus Christ as Saviour and Lord. (See Rom. 8:29, 30.) Jacob was one of the elect because, before he had done anything good or bad, God foresaw that he would respond to His love by faith (Rom. 9:11). God does not arbitrarily decide that a particular few will be saved and the rest lost. His Spirit does the same convicting work in the hearts of all humanity. (See John 1:7, 9, 12; 12:32.) Those who respond by faith are the elect.



4. How are the nonelect “blinded” (KJV), “hardened” (RSV)? Rom. 11:7-10.

“In the nontechnical language of the Bible, God is often said to do that which He does not prevent. . . .

“It has thus been made clear that the believing Jews, like the believing Gentiles, are saved only by grace (Rom. 11:6; cf. Eph. 2:8). As for the rest of Israel, they have been hardened, not because God has cast them away, for He has not (Rom. 11:1, 2), but because they have sought to establish their own righteousness by their own works and have not submitted to the righteousness of God (ch. 10:3).”—*SDA Bible Commentary*, vol. 6, p. 605.

What does maintaining a heart relationship with Christ have to do with being one of the “elect”? (See Rom. 11:4, 5.)

II. THE GOSPEL FOR JEWS AND GENTILES (Rom. 11:11-16).

5. In what sense did the trespass of the Jews result in salvation for the Gentiles? Rom. 11:11, 12, 15, 16.

“Again I ask, Did they stumble so as to fall beyond recovery?” (Rom. 11:11, NIV).

Because the Jews throughout the Roman Empire tended to reject the gospel of Jesus Christ, Christians became more earnest in winning Gentile converts. It was not necessary for the Jews to stumble so that the Gentiles could be blessed with the gospel. But because the Jews refused to listen, the evangelistic efforts of the early Christians were more readily available for Gentiles. (See Acts 8:4; 11:19-21; 13:45-49.)

Romans 11:16 means that, just as those who initially responded to Christ’s call were holy, so are those who respond later and join the faithful remnant.

6. How many of his fellow Jews did Paul expect to save? Rom. 11:13, 14.

There is no suggestion in this chapter or anywhere else in Scripture that

all Israelites will be saved. Paul hoped that some would respond to the gospel and be saved. He had no hope that all would respond. He said that his ministry both to Jews and Gentiles was "that I might by all means save some" (1 Cor. 9:22, RSV).

How grateful are you that the saving grace of Christ is constantly available to you? In what ways do you express your gratitude?



III. GRAFTED BRANCHES (Rom. 11:17-24).

7. What did Paul mean by saying, "Thou bearest not the root, but the root thee"? Rom. 11:17, 18.

Unbelieving Gentiles are likened to branches of a wild olive tree. The faithful in Israel are represented by branches of a cultivated olive tree. This imagery comes from the Old Testament. (See Jer. 11:16; Hosea 14:6.) Gentile Christians are likened to branches from a wild tree that have been grafted into the cultivated olive tree. The unbelieving Jews are likened to branches that have been broken off the cultivated olive tree.

Paul would have the Gentile Christians maintain a humble, loving attitude toward unbelieving Jews. Gentile Christians should always remember that the cultivated tree, consisting of the oracles of God given to Israel (Rom. 9:4), is the very basis of their spiritual life. The same everlasting covenant promises given to Abraham and to the prophets are for all believers today. (See Heb. 8:8-12; compare Jer. 31:31-34.)

8. Why were the original branches broken off the cultivated olive tree? By what means will the grafted branches survive? Rom. 11:19, 20.

Once again Paul returns to the central message of the Epistle to the Romans. The natural branches of the cultivated olive tree were broken off because of unbelief. The Jews were rejected not because of predetermined divine decrees by which God arbitrarily decided that they should be lost. They were rejected because they refused to accept Jesus Christ as Saviour and Lord.

The Gentiles are warned that only through faith will they be attached to the cultivated olive tree. Here is a message for all Christians. To be a member of the church is not adequate for salvation. Only as we have a faith-grace relationship with Jesus Christ, constantly drawing spiritual nourishment from the parent tree, can we enjoy the blessings of present salvation and the hope of eternal life.

9. What evidence does Paul give that the "elect" may ultimately become nonelect? Rom. 11:21, 22.

What happened to the unbelieving Jews will happen to any professing Christian who loses his union with Christ. In the same way that initial justification involved receiving the Holy Spirit into our hearts (Titus 3:5-7), so continuation of our justified relationship with Christ involves daily renewal of that experience. To lose Christ is to lose present salvation. The believing elect become the unbelieving nonelect when they turn away from Jesus.

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10. What is the only circumstance under which Jews can be saved? Rom. 11:23, 24.

The Bible does not teach that literal Israel will be restored to its former chosen-nation status and that the prophecies of the Old Testament regarding its national greatness and predominance will definitely and unconditionally be fulfilled. Some Bible interpreters have drawn this conclusion on the basis of such conditional promises as the following: Isa. 14:1-3; 27:12, 13; 43:1-7; Jer. 16:14-16.

Such wonderful promises were forfeited when Israel as a nation rejected Jesus Christ. These promises will now be fulfilled to spiritual Israel. At the second coming of Jesus, God's faithful people around the world, whatever their nationality, will be gathered and taken to the heavenly Jerusalem. At the end of the 1,000 years this Holy City will descend to earth and the Old Testament promises will ultimately be fulfilled for all those who have believed. (See Revelation 21, 22.)

How could you use Romans 11:17-24 to answer those who believe in once-saved-always-saved?

IV. GOD'S GIFTS AND CALL IRREVOCABLE (Rom. 11:25-36).

11. What does Paul mean by a "mystery"? What is signified by "the fulness of the Gentiles"? In what sense will "all Israel" be saved? Rom. 11:25-27.

The word *mystery* is often used in the New Testament to refer to "something that God wills to make known to those who are willing to receive His revelation," rather than to something that He desires to keep secret. Throughout Paul's writings the word carries the meaning of something that, though incapable of being fully understood by unassisted human reason, has now been made known by divine revelation. (See Rom. 16:25, 26.) In Revelation 1:20; 17:5, 7, *mystery* has reference to a symbol that requires interpretation for its understanding.

The mystery made known in Romans 11 is how God intends to save "all Israel" (verses 25, 26).

"The fulness of the Gentiles . . . all Israel." The New International Version translates Romans 11:25: "I do not want you to be ignorant of this

mystery, brothers, so that you may not be conceited: Israel has experienced a hardening in part until the full number of the Gentiles has come in." In Romans 11:12 Paul speaks of the "fulness" of Israel: "How much more will their full inclusion mean!" (RSV). Yet he knows that only a remnant have responded to God's grace (Rom. 11:5); only some of them are likely to respond and so be saved (verse 14); only those who choose to believe in Christ will be grafted back into the parent stock (verse 23).

The full number of the Gentiles refers to all who will respond to the preaching of the gospel before the second coming of Jesus. We know from other passages of Scripture that this will be only a remnant. (See Rev. 12:17.) The remnant of Israel saved plus the remnant of the Gentiles saved together comprise "all Israel." To the parent olive tree some of the discarded natural branches (Jews) will be grafted again, and some of the wild branches (Gentiles) will also be grafted. Then spiritual Israel will be complete, and Christ will come to translate His believing people to heaven.



12. What does Paul mean by *election* as the word is used in Romans 11:28? What is meant by the statement that God's gifts and call are "irrevocable"? Rom. 11:28-32, NIV.

The unbelieving Jews, like unbelieving Gentiles, are enemies of God because they have rejected the gospel. However, the Lord made specific promises to the Israelite forefathers. Israel as a nation was chosen to teach the world God's will and way. They failed, but the Lord is still able to keep His covenant promises with Abraham and with the Old Testament prophets. Those Jews who accept Christ by faith (the elect) are part of spiritual Israel. Because spiritual Israel, all who believe in Christ, will be saved, God's promises will be fulfilled. Thus "the gifts and the call of God are irrevocable" (Rom. 11:29, RSV).

The disobedience of the Jews resulted in blessing to the Gentiles because the gospel was taken to the entire world. But the mercy shown to the Gentiles arouses the Jews to a realization of their faulty relationship with God. Many will come to Christ and obtain mercy (Rom. 11:31). God has mercy upon all those who accept Christ as Saviour and Lord. (See Gal. 6:14-16; Heb. 4:16.)

13. How does Paul describe the God of our salvation? Rom. 11:33-36.

WHAT IS OUR RESPONSIBILITY TO THE JEWS? "When this gospel shall be presented in its fullness to the Jews, many will accept Christ as the Messiah. Among Christian ministers there are only a few who feel called upon to labor for the Jewish people; but to those who have been often passed by, as well as to all others, the message of mercy and hope in Christ is to come.

"In the closing proclamation of the gospel, when special work is to be done for classes of people hitherto neglected, God expects His messengers to take particular interest in the Jewish people whom they find in all parts

of the earth. As the Old Testament Scriptures are blended with the New in an explanation of Jehovah's eternal purpose, this will be to many of the Jews as the dawn of a new creation, the resurrection of the soul. As they see the Christ of the gospel dispensation portrayed in the pages of the Old Testament Scriptures, and perceive how clearly the New Testament explains the Old, their slumbering faculties will be aroused, and they will recognize Christ as the Saviour of the world. Many will by faith receive Christ as their Redeemer. . . .

"Among the Jews are some who, like Saul of Tarsus, are mighty in the Scriptures, and these will proclaim with wonderful power the immutability of the law of God. The God of Israel will bring this to pass in our day. His arm is not shortened that it cannot save. As His servants labor in faith for those who have long been neglected and despised, His salvation will be revealed."—*The Acts of the Apostles*, pp. 380, 381.



FURTHER STUDY AND MEDITATION: Read *The Acts of the Apostles*, "Salvation to the Jews," pp. 372-382.

SUMMARY: Although Israel's rejection of the Messiah resulted in the loss of their status as a chosen nation before God, the Lord seeks to lead the Jewish people to salvation through Jesus Christ. Those who believe are united with believing Gentiles into one body as spiritual Israel.

BANGLADESH - 107 million

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the unentered areas
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The Fruits of a New Relationship

THIS WEEK'S STUDY: Romans 12; 13.



MEMORY TEXT: "I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service. And be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God" (Romans 12: 1, 2).

THE CHRISTIAN'S RELATIONSHIPS ARE MOTIVATED BY LOVE. To be a Christian calls for total surrender to God and His service. The born-again, justified relationship with Christ results in willing, loving service for God and humanity.

OUTLINE:

- I. Spiritual Worship (Rom. 12:1, 2).
- II. Proper Use of God's Gifts (Rom. 12:3-8).
- III. Guidelines for Personal Relationships (Rom. 12:9-21).
- IV. The Christian's Attitude to the State (Rom. 13:1-7).
- V. An Appeal to Love (Rom. 13:8-14).

A REASONABLE SACRIFICE. Thus far the apostle has explained how God saves us through the work of Jesus Christ. By His Spirit Jesus moves us to turn from sin and to surrender our lives to Him in faith. His forgiveness of our sins (justification) includes transformation of our hearts by the work of the Holy Spirit. We are declared righteous because by His coming to dwell in our hearts we have the gift of righteousness.

Our new standing and state before God are to be maintained by continual surrender of our entire being to Jesus Christ. Under the Old Covenant such a surrender involved presenting to God an animal sacrifice. Under the new covenant we place ourselves on the altar of sacrifice for Christ. Paul adds that our sacrifice is to be holy, acceptable, and perfect.

In this week's lesson we study the results of presenting our bodies as a living sacrifice for Christ. Our acceptance of Jesus and His gracious Lordship results in new relationships. As Christians we are no longer shaped by the lordship of sin. All that we do is governed by the Lordship of Jesus Christ. Either Jesus is Lord of all, or He is not Lord at all in our lives.

Paul emphasizes the impact God's grace has on human relationships: (1) in the Christian community; (2) in society in general; (3) in the state;

and (4) in one's personal associations with others.

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I. SPIRITUAL WORSHIP (Rom. 12:1, 2).

1. Why should we make a complete consecration of our entire being to God? Rom. 12:1.

Because God is merciful, wise, and just, as the previous chapter has stated (Rom. 11:33-36), and because He demonstrates such mercy to those who respond to His grace, it is the most reasonable thing in the world to make a total surrender to Him.

The Greek word translated *reasonable* (Rom. 12:1) also means "spiritual" (RSV, NIV). The spiritual person is the one whose life is given to Christ. Such a person is "holy, acceptable unto God" (Rom. 12:1). (Compare Rom. 6:17-19; 1 Peter 1:16; 3:11.)

2. How are our minds transformed and renewed? Rom. 12:2; 8:5-14 (compare 1 Cor. 2:12-16).

Paul relates transformation of mind to the work of the Holy Spirit. When the Holy Spirit dwells in the life the righteous Christ is there. Evil in its manifold forms is driven out, and holiness reigns in the life.

Renewal through the power of the Holy Spirit. "Will men and women consider how God regards the creatures He has made? He formed man's mind. We do not think one noble thought that does not come from Him. He knows all the mysterious workings of the human mind; for did He not make it? God sees that sin has debased and degraded man, but He looks upon him with pity and compassion; for He sees that Satan has him in his power.

"All true reformation begins with soul-cleansing. It is by the washing of regeneration [Titus 3:5-7] and the renewing of the mind through the power of the Holy Spirit, that a change is wrought in the life."—*Sons and Daughters of God*, p. 105.

3. What results will be seen when the mind is renewed? Rom. 12:2.

The Greek word translated *prove* means also "put to the test, examine, prove by testing." The latter part of Romans 12:2 may be translated: "So that you can prove by testing what God's will is—his good, pleasing, and perfect will."

Because the mind has been renewed by the Holy Spirit it is possible for believers in Christ to demonstrate God's perfect will in their lives. The power supplied makes possible thought and action that is good, pleasing to God, and perfect in His sight. (See 2 Cor. 7:1; Phil. 2:15; 2 Cor. 10:4, 5.)

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A work wrought by the Holy Spirit. "Man, fallen man, may be transformed by the renewing of the mind, so that he can 'prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God.' How does he prove this? By the Holy Spirit taking possession of his mind, spirit, heart, and character. Where does the proving come in? 'We are made a spectacle unto the world, and to angels, and to men.' A real work is wrought by the Holy Spirit upon the human character, and its fruits are seen.

"Just as a good tree will bear good fruit, so will the tree that is actually planted in the Lord's garden produce good fruit unto eternal life. Besetting sins are overcome; evil thoughts are not allowed in the mind; evil habits are purged from the soul temple. The tendencies which have been biased in a wrong direction are turned in a right direction. Wrong dispositions and feelings are changed, new principles of action supplied, and there is a new standard of character. Holy tempers and sanctified emotions are now the fruit borne upon the Christian tree. An entire transformation has taken place. This is the work to be wrought."—Ellen G. White Comments, *SDA Bible Commentary*, vol. 6, p. 1080.

Even though you are aware of your human weakness and total dependence upon Christ, are you also conscious that He is giving you the kind of spiritual power described in the above quotation?

II. PROPER USE OF GOD'S GIFTS (ROM. 12:3-8).

4. **What relationships are to govern the self-image of the Christian? Rom. 12:3-5.**

Have an honest estimate of yourself. "I bid every one among you not to think of himself more highly than he ought to think, but to think with sober judgment" (RSV). "As your spiritual teacher I . . . give this advice to each one of you. Don't cherish exaggerated ideas of yourself or your importance, but try to have a sane estimate of your capabilities by the light of the faith that God has given to you all" (Phillips).

The individual's measure of faith should determine his or her self-concept. Believers should be constantly aware of their relationship to Christ and to those who comprise His "body." Acceptance of the gospel results in a new sense of self-worth. Yet it is to be governed by reason and reality, not by some exaggerated concept of one's abilities. (Compare 1 Cor. 4:6.)

5. **Compare the list of spiritual gifts in Romans 12:6-8 with the list in 1 Corinthians 12:27-31 and that in Ephesians 4:11-16. What is the basic purpose of these gifts?**
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Each Christian receives some gift. Not all Christians receive the same gift. Not every Christian will be able to preach or teach or to care for church business. The important point is, every Christian has some gift or a number of gifts, and his or her responsibility is to discover what they are.

Every gift is to be used for the glory of God and the edification of the body of Christ.

How are you using your talents in God's service? Have you buried some talents that could be a great blessing to your church?

TUE III. GUIDELINES FOR PERSONAL RELATIONSHIPS (Rom. 12:9-21).

6. How do we "overcome evil with good"? Rom. 12:9, 21 (compare 1 John 5:4).

The life of faith is the victorious life. In overcoming evil, human will is involved in resisting Satan and submitting to Christ (James 4:7, 8; Heb. 12:4). However, it must always be recognized that apart from the power of Christ there can be no victory (John 15:5). Only by faith in Him can we conquer our tendency to evil (Phil. 4:13; Rom. 7:25).

7. List the twelve positive commands given in Romans 12:9-13:

_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____

8. What correspondence do you see between the guidelines for human relationships given by Paul and those given by Jesus? Compare:

Rom. 12:14 with Matt. 5:11 _____

Rom. 12:15 with Matt. 5:4 _____

Rom. 12:16 with Matt. 5:3 _____

Rom. 12:17 with Matt. 5:7, 38-42 _____

Rom. 12:20 with Matt. 5:43, 44 _____

Paul has focused our attention on the most fundamental attribute of Christian life—love. Believers are not only to maintain a close and cordial relationship with fellow believers but also with those who oppose their

convictions. The Christian is admonished to live, as far as possible, in peace with all classes of society. He is not to avenge himself but leave to God both judgment and reward.

How can you apply Paul's counsel regarding personal relationships in (a) your home; (b) your church; (c) your work situation?



IV. THE CHRISTIAN'S ATTITUDE TO THE STATE (Rom. 13:1-7).

9. How do you explain the origin of governing authorities in the world? Why were they instituted? How does God expect us to relate to them? Rom. 13:1, 2 (compare Dan. 2:21, 37).

10. What is one of the important functions God intends secular rulers to exercise? Rom. 13:3, 4.

11. For what reasons should the Christian be loyal to secular authorities? Rom. 13:5.

12. What civic duty is expected of all Christians? Rom. 13:6, 7 (compare Mark 12:17).

How is the Christian to relate to secular authorities? How do we understand Paul's counsel? To what degree are Christians expected to support governing authorities when their policies are contrary to the principles of the Word of God? What kind of allegiance did the Lord expect the early Christians to give to Nero, the tyrannical Roman emperor? Does God expect Christians to obey government edicts that contradict the specific commands given us in the Bible?

Some vital guidelines. To guide us in our thinking we will do well to take some additional points into consideration:

a. The Bible upholds the rights of civil authority which God has allowed to come to power for the purpose of ordering human affairs. God is committed to order in society. He is opposed to chaos and disorder.

b. No governing authority has the right to claim for itself total and absolute devotion. This belongs exclusively to the Creator. (See Acts 4:18-20; 5:28-32.)

c. Civil authority or government that claims for itself divine prerogatives is not the kind of government Paul refers to in this passage. The Christian reaction to such government is clearly reflected in Revelation 17:1—19:10.

d. Paul describes governments as agents of good. They are to promote civic good and punish evil and disorder. But what happens when a government reverses those roles and turns out to be tyrannical? Christians should be loyal citizens, in every possible way supporting government authorities. But when civil law contradicts the law of God and Christians are confronted by a choice, the Lord requires us to obey His will.

See *The Acts of the Apostles*, pp. 68, 69.



V. AN APPEAL TO LOVE (Rom. 13:8-14).

13. What principle summarizes the Ten Commandments? Rom. 13:8-10 (compare Matt. 22:37-39).

Paul does not teach that love replaces law for the Christian. In Scripture, love and law are not antagonistic to each another; they are complementary. The law of God is a law of love (Rom. 13:9), and a "law of liberty" (James 2:12). As we conform to the principles of the law by the power of the Holy Spirit (Rom. 8:3, 4), we demonstrate our love to God and to our fellow human beings.

14. Explain the statement, "For now is our salvation nearer than when we believed." What is the "day" that is at hand? Rom. 13:11, 12.

There are three essential aspects to one's salvation: past, present, and future:

a. The Christian can look to the past experience of regeneration and say: "I was saved." (See Titus 3:5; 2 Tim. 1:9.)

b. In view of his present experience of sanctification he can say, "I am being saved." 1 Corinthians 1:18 translates literally: "But for those of us who are being saved, it is the power of God."

c. With a look to his future redemption or the culmination of salvation at the time of Christ's return he can say, "I shall be saved." (See Rev. 21:24.) This is the sense in which we can understand Paul's statement. Paul wrote Romans 13:11, 12 while expecting the second coming of Christ. He knew that certain major world events would have to occur before Jesus would come (2 Thessalonians 2). Nevertheless, he trusted fully the promise of the Lord Himself (John 14:1-3).

God does not measure time as humans do. Yet we have every reason to heed the counsel that the end of all things is at hand and Jesus is about to return. (See 2 Peter 3:8-13.) Let us watch and be ready!

15. In view of the soon approaching day of the Lord, what earnest advice does Paul give? Rom. 13:13, 14 (compare Eph. 6:11-18).

Christian conduct in view of the soon return of the Lord. "Sincere Christians have no doubtful piety. They have put on the Lord Jesus Christ, and have made no provision for the flesh, to fulfill the lusts thereof. They are constantly looking to Jesus for His orders, as a servant looks to his master, or as a maid looks to her mistress. Wheresoever God's providence may lead, they stand ready to go. They take no glory to themselves. They do not call anything they have—learning, talents, property—their own, but regard themselves as only stewards of the manifold grace of Christ, and servants to the church for Christ's sake. These are messengers of the Lord, a light amid the darkness. Their hearts throb in unison with the great heart of Christ."—Ellen G. White Comments, *SDA Bible Commentary*, vol. 6, p. 1081.

WHAT IS YOUR PERSONAL COMMITMENT? In this week's lesson Paul has focused attention on our physical bodies, our thought life, and the world around us. Can you share with others the experience of victory God has given you in these three areas of life? Complete the following sentences:

- The Lord has given me victory over physical appetites by _____

- I am now able to control my thoughts because _____

- My relationships with those around me have grown because _____

FURTHER STUDY AND MEDITATION: Read the chapter entitled "Consecration" in *Steps to Christ*, pp. 43-48.

SUMMARY: In Romans 12 and 13 Paul outlines the basic principles of everyday Christian conduct. He places special emphasis upon service to the glory of God, as it relates to individuals, the church, and the state. Paul is deeply concerned about love in Christian relationships especially in view of the fast-approaching day of salvation.

Lesson 12

December 16-22

Unity of Weak and Strong

THIS WEEK'S STUDY: Romans 14:1—15:13.

SAB **PM** **MEMORY TEXT:** "Let us therefore follow after the things which make for peace, and things wherewith one may edify another" (Romans 14:19).

TOLERANCE IN UNIMPORTANT MATTERS. On those issues in which no divine law or principle is involved, love, understanding, and tolerance should prevail in the Christian church.

OUTLINE:

- I. Do Not Pass Judgment (Rom. 14:1-12).**
- II. Strengthen One Another (Rom. 14:13-18).**
- III. Follow Peace (Rom. 14:19-23).**
- IV. Christ's Example (Rom. 15:1-13).**

WALK IN LOVE. The message of Romans 14 has a striking resemblance to the message of 1 Corinthians 13. A modern missionary's paraphrase of 1 Corinthians 13 reads like this:

"If I have the language perfectly and speak like a native, and have not His love for them, I am nothing. If I have diplomas and degrees and know all the up-to-date methods, and have not His touch of understanding love, I am nothing. If I am able to argue successfully against the religions of the people and make fools of them, and have not His wooing note, I am nothing. If I have all faith and great ideals and magnificent plans, and not His love that sweats and bleeds and weeps and prays and pleads, I am nothing. If I give my clothes and money to them, and have not His love for them, I am nothing.

"If I surrender all prospects, leave home and friends, make the sacrifices of a missionary career, and turn sour and selfish amid the daily annoyances and slights of a missionary life, and have not the love that yields its rights, its pleasures, its pet plans, I am nothing. Virtue has ceased to go out of me. If I can heal all manner of sickness and disease, but wound hearts and hurt feelings for want of His love that is kind, I am nothing. If I can write articles or publish books that win applause, but fail to transcribe the Word of the Cross into the language of His love, I am nothing."—*Encyclopedia of 7700 Illustrations*, pp. 758, 759.

Tolerance and love are the emphases of Romans 14 and 15. When Christ reigns in our lives we respect and support our brethren and sisters whether they are weak or strong in the faith.

I. DO NOT PASS JUDGMENT (Rom. 14:1-12).

1. In the context of the book of Romans, who is the person described as being "weak in the faith"? Rom. 14:1.
-

The consistent emphasis throughout the Epistle to the Romans is that salvation is by faith, not by works. (See Rom. 3:20-24; 4:2-5; 9:30-33; 10:4.) The one who is weak in faith finds it difficult to cease depending on personal works for justification. Such an individual is likely to cling to certain religious attitudes and observances, not because they are required by God, but because their performance seems essential to the gift of God's righteousness.

While Paul does not in any sense condone works as a means of earning salvation, he pleads for tolerance with the person who is having difficulty giving up this attitude. Romans 14 does not discuss divine laws that are fixed and unchangeable, those that are to be observed by faith in Christ. It deals with matters that are not important to Christian life and salvation.



2. What was the problem over food that arose in some early Christian churches? Rom. 14:2, 3 (compare 1 Corinthians 8).
-

The issue at stake in Romans 14:2, 3 is not whether one should include flesh in the diet or be a vegetarian. Nor are these verses suggesting that a Christian can eat anything and everything.

"Paul is not speaking of foods hygienically harmful. He is not suggesting that the Christian of strong faith may eat anything, regardless of its effect upon his physical well-being. He has already made plain, in ch. 12:1, that the true believer will see to it that his body is preserved holy and acceptable to God as a living sacrifice. The man of strong faith will regard it as an act of spiritual worship to maintain good health (Rom. 12:1; 1 Cor. 10:31)." —*SDA Bible Commentary*, vol. 6, p. 635.

Food offered to idols. One of the problems current among Christians in Paul's day was the eating of food offered to idols. Paul was writing from Corinth, where this problem was being addressed. (See 1 Corinthians 8.) Moreover, there were Christians in the Roman church of Paul's acquaintance who had migrated from Greece and Asia Minor. (See Romans 16.) It is reasonable to conclude that the Romans 14 issue is the same one spoken of in 1 Corinthians 8.

Some Christians could eat food that had been sacrificed to idols without any thought of idol worship. Others had been idol worshipers before becoming Christians. For them eating food that had been offered to an idol involved idol worship, even though the food was intrinsically good. They could not separate eating such food from worship of idols. Paul counseled that those who had no such scruples should not eat food offered to idols in the presence of those brothers and sisters who had once been idol worshipers. Tolerance suggested abstention under certain circumstances.

3. Why should we not pass judgment upon others? Are there circumstances in which the church should judge the moral conduct of its members? Rom. 14:3, 4, 10-12 (compare Matt. 7:1-5; 1 Cor. 5:1-5, 9-13).

Only God knows the heart. "Jesus said, 'Judge not, that ye be not judged.' That is, do not set yourself up as a standard. Do not make your opinions, your views of duty, your interpretations of Scripture, a criterion for others and in your heart condemn them if they do not come up to your ideal. Do not criticize others, conjecturing as to their motives and passing judgment upon them. . . .

"We cannot read the heart. Ourselves faulty, we are not qualified to sit in judgment upon others. Finite men can judge only from outward appearance. To Him alone who knows the secret springs of action, and who deals tenderly and compassionately, is it given to decide the case of every soul."—*Thoughts From the Mount of Blessing*, p. 124.

Church discipline. "Christ . . . gives no liberty for any man to pass judgment upon others. In the sermon on the mount He forbade this. It is the prerogative of God. But on the church in its organized capacity He places a responsibility for the individual members. Toward those who fall into sin, the church has a duty, to warn, to instruct, and if possible to restore. 'Reprove, rebuke, exhort,' the Lord says, 'with all long-suffering and doctrine.' . . . If they persist in sin, the judgment you have declared from God's Word is pronounced upon them in heaven."—*Gospel Workers*, p. 502.

-  4. What does Paul teach in regard to the observance of particular days? Rom. 14:5, 6.

A number of major points help to explain this scripture:

a. Paul is not suggesting that observance of the seventh-day Sabbath is optional. Paul himself regularly observed the Sabbath (Acts 13:14, 44; 16:13; 17:1, 2; 18:4).

● Paul upheld the Ten Commandments as the standard of righteousness for justified Christians (Rom. 3:31; 7:7, 12, 14; 8:3, 4). He never suggested that any of these commandments were temporary ceremonial observances, or that any of them had been done away. In this he agreed with Jesus' statement in Matthew 5:17-20.

b. The observance of the days referred to in Romans 14:5, 6 is optional for Christians. They are not the weekly Sabbath days spoken of in the fourth commandment (Ex. 20:8-11). Paul referred to the same problem in Galatians 4:10, 11 and Colossians 2:16, 17. The days he wrote of were the seven annual sabbaths that were part of the ceremonial law that God had given Israel. (See Leviticus 23; compare Numbers 28, 29.) When Christ died type met antitype. The annual feasts that pointed forward to His sacrifice and ministry no longer were to be observed. These feasts provided shadows, or forecasts, of the Messiah's work.

c. Some of the Roman Christians were exalting one ceremonial sabbath above another, while others were regarding every ceremonial sabbath as of equal importance. Paul was not speaking about those who did not observe any of the ceremonial days.

d. The Greek of Romans 14:5 translates literally: "One distinguishes a day above a day, another distinguishes every day." The last phrase, "every day," does not mean every day of the week. Paul is not saying that some people regard every day of the week as of the same importance, without any special regard for the seventh-day Sabbath. "Every day" does not always mean every day of the week. For example, in Exodus 16:4 "every day" means five days of the week. Israelites were to gather twice as much manna on the sixth day and none at all on Sabbath.

"'Every day' meant every one of the days that were regarded as holy under the *ceremonial* law, which is the law obviously under discussion here. Why should Paul need to interject that he did not mean to include the seventh day, when the seventh-day Sabbath was not part of the controversy before him? Nowhere in all Paul's writings is the seventh-day Sabbath the subject of controversy!"—Francis D. Nichol, *Answers to Objections* (Washington, D.C.: Review and Herald, 1952), p. 193.

Search your heart. Are you ever guilty of judging your brethren and sisters in matters that are not required by God? What would you suggest is the best solution to this judgmental attitude?



II. STRENGTHEN ONE ANOTHER (Rom. 14:13-18).

5. What does Paul mean by saying, "There is nothing unclean of itself"? Rom. 14:14.

To conclude that Paul meant absolutely nothing is unclean would be to arrive at an absurdity. Paul was a Jew who respected the Old Testament laws regarding clean and unclean meats. (See Leviticus 11.) He knew that God had completely ruled out some animals as food, including swine's flesh and mice. (See Lev. 11:7; Isa. 65:4; 66:17.)

Paul meant that no good food, in and of itself, is unclean. Some Christians in his day regarded some food as unclean because it had been offered to idols. But in fact, it was good food that could be eaten.

The same explanation can be given to Paul's statement to the Corinthians, "All things are lawful" (1 Cor. 10:23). Of course, he meant that all good things are lawful. He knew that immorality and the breaking of any of God's commandments were unlawful. (See 1 Thess. 4:3; Heb. 10:26-31.)

6. If a strong brother discovers that his practices are causing his weaker brother to stumble in his Christian life, what should he do? Rom. 14:13, 15, 16.

The message in Romans 14, as that of 1 Corinthians 8, is that there are

some practices that are good in themselves which Christians in certain situations should avoid. If following these practices has a negative influence on someone else's spiritual life, they should be dropped in the interests of Christian charity. In other situations where these unimportant matters are not a cause of stumbling to anyone, they may be practiced with no harm to the person who does them.

7. What important truth are both the weak and the strong Christian to realize? What is the essential nature of the kingdom of God, and what is it not? Rom. 14:17, 18.

Because belonging to God's kingdom involves receiving His "righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost," there is no reason why a Christian of strong faith should refuse to give up an unimportant practice that causes deep concern to a brother or sister in the faith. The blessings of justification and sanctification far outweigh in importance any preference of taste one may have for food and drink.

Can you think of other practices that are right in themselves but which could be an offense to some people?

III. FOLLOW PEACE (Rom. 14:19-23).

8. What two important aspects of Christian growth does Paul mention in Romans 14:19?

9. Compare Paul's injunction of Romans 14:20, 21 with that of verse 15. What important lesson can we learn from it?

"Flesh. . . . The word occurs only here and in 1 Cor. 8:13. In Rom. 14:15, 20 . . . the word for food in general, is used.

"Wine. Flesh and wine were evidently the principal objects of the weaker brother's religious scruples, probably because they were customarily used by the pagans in sacrifice to their idols."—*SDA Bible Commentary*, vol. 6, p. 641.

Paul was not discussing the rights and wrongs of drinking alcohol. That is another question. The Bible does not condone partaking of alcohol. (See Prov. 20:1.) Partaking of the *particular kind* of flesh and wine he discusses was not a matter of importance because they were not harmful in themselves or forbidden by God as food. Such eating and drinking were wrong to the one who had been an idol worshiper because the flesh and wine had been offered to an idol.

10. What counsel is Paul giving us in Romans 14:22, 23?

Respect the convictions of others. Because “one man’s faith allows him to eat” food offered to idols (Rom. 14:2, NIV), he does not have the right to parade his faith and Christian liberty before those who have scruples that he feels are unreasonable.

The principle applies in other areas of life. Cultural differences between Christians of different nations could involve conflicts within the worldwide church unless those of stronger faith have gentle respect for the convictions of those who do not see things their way. The mature Christian should not under ordinary circumstances participate in anything good in itself which the weak brother or sister interprets as sinful.

Act from settled conviction. “Paul’s meaning [in Rom. 14:23] is that if a Christian does not act from strong personal conviction that what he does is right, but, instead, complies weakly with the judgment of others, then his action is sinful. The Christian should never violate his conscience. It may require educating. It may tell him that certain things are wrong that in themselves may not be wrong. But until convinced by the Word and the Spirit of God that a certain course is proper for him, he ought not to pursue it. He must not make others the criterion for his conduct; he must go to the Scriptures and learn for himself his duty in the matter.”—*SDA Bible Commentary*, vol. 6, p. 641.

But he who has doubts (verse 23) or “debates within himself” may be likened to the double-minded man. (See James 1:6-8.)



IV. CHRIST’S EXAMPLE (Rom. 15:1-13).

- 11. Why should those strong in the faith have respect for the feelings and convictions of their weaker brethren and sisters? Rom. 15:1-3 (compare Phil. 2:5-8; 1 Peter 2:21).**

“A great work of saving souls remains yet to be done. Every angel in glory is engaged in this work, while every demon of darkness is opposing it. Christ has demonstrated to us the great value of souls in that He came to the world with the hoarded love of eternity in His heart, offering to make man heir to all His wealth. He unveils before us the love of the Father for the guilty race and presents Him as just and the justifier of him that believeth.

“‘Christ pleased not Himself.’ He did nothing for Himself; His work was in behalf of fallen man. Selfishness stood abashed in His presence. He assumed our nature that He might suffer in our stead. Selfishness, the sin of the world, has become the prevailing sin of the church. In sacrificing Himself for the good of men, Christ strikes at the root of all selfishness.”—*Testimonies*, vol. 5, p. 204.

- 12. What do the Old Testament Scriptures and the New Testament gospel provide us? How does this affect Christian unity? Rom. 15:4-6.**

13. How did Christ demonstrate His infinite love for both Jews and Gentiles? Rom. 15:7-12.

The coming of Christ confirmed the truthfulness of God's promises to the patriarchs. Through them all mankind is blessed. Christ's redemption of both Jews and Gentiles is the greatest evidence of His universal love. He asks all believers to demonstrate the same unprejudiced love for others. The joy, peace, and power of the Holy Spirit are to reign in the heart of every trusting follower of Jesus (Rom. 15:13). In the kingdoms of grace and glory understanding and harmony will always prevail.

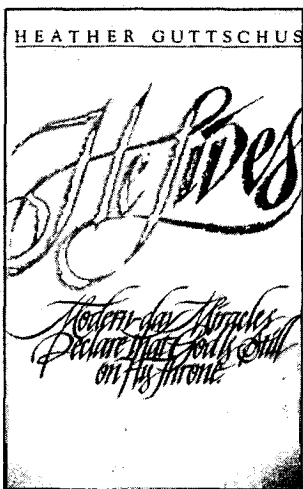
MY CONTRIBUTION TO UNITY. What can I do to improve the spiritual unity of:

● my home? _____

● my church? _____

FURTHER STUDY AND MEDITATION: Read *Testimonies*, vol. 5, pp. 202-207.

SUMMARY: Christians are admonished to accept one another in loving fellowship despite differences of opinion and culture. In matters that are unimportant to spiritual life there should be tolerance, understanding, and respect for the convictions of others.



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Work, Give, Pray, Believe

THIS WEEK'S STUDY: Romans 15:14—16:27.



MEMORY TEXT: "And the God of peace shall bruise Satan under your feet shortly. The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you. Amen" (Romans 16:20).

WHY WORK, PRAY, GIVE, BELIEVE? Because of our love for the Lord Jesus Christ. Not only is our own eternal salvation at stake, but also that of those to whom we witness, many of whom will respond to Christ's loving appeal given through us.

OUTLINE:

- I. Paul's Reasons for Writing (Rom. 15:14-21).**
- II. Paul's Plan to Visit Rome (Rom. 15:22-29).**
- III. Prayer Requests (Rom. 15:30-33).**
- IV. Personal Greetings (Rom. 16:1-16).**
- V. Glory to God (Rom. 16:17-27).**

PAUL SHARES HIS PASTORAL CONCERN. In this lesson we study the final part of Paul's letter. He reminds the believers at Rome that he craves their prayers and support in fulfilling his earnest desire to present to God a group of Gentile believers. He praises God for everything Christ has wrought through his ministry for the Gentiles by the power of the Holy Spirit.

Paul unfolds his future plans to travel to Jerusalem and Rome. He urges his brothers and sisters in the Lord to pray that God will deliver him from unbelievers in Judea when he arrives in Jerusalem. He wants his ministry to the Jewish Christian church to be acceptable and hopes that his visit to Rome will be a joyous one.

In chapter 16 Paul sends greetings to many of his former associates and converts. These were people who had moved from the East to Rome and who now were loyal members of the Roman Christian church. The epistle concludes with some words of caution followed by one of the most moving and eloquent benedictions in the writings of Paul.

I. PAUL'S REASONS FOR WRITING (Rom. 15:14-21).

- 1. Why was Paul able to commend his readers? What made them the kind of people they were? Rom. 15:14.**

The Roman Christians had responded to the message of the gospel. They had received, and continued to receive, the gift of the righteousness of Christ by the Holy Spirit (Rom. 8:9, 10). Thus they were justified believers who were enjoying present salvation in Christ. "Full of goodness" (Rom. 15:14) means that they were willing slaves to righteousness (Rom. 6:18, RSV). The blessings of sanctification were theirs, and they were growing in grace as they relied daily on the holiness of Jesus.

The knowledge with which the Roman Christians were filled was not the objective kind of knowledge sought by scholars. (See 1 Cor. 8:1.) Instead it was the experience of knowing God through Christ. It was the knowledge imparted by the Holy Spirit, who takes up His abode in the heart of the grateful believer. Paul spoke of this kind of knowledge in his Epistle to the Corinthians (1 Cor. 2:8-16) and in his Epistle to the Ephesians (Eph. 3:16-21).

SUN

2. What was Paul's major reason for writing as he did? Rom. 15:15, 16.

On one occasion when Michelangelo began to carve a huge block of marble, he declared that his specific aim was to release the angel who was imprisoned in the stone.

Paul had that kind of vision. He could see a people in a multitude, a church in a mob, a saint in a sinner. He addressed his fellow Christians with loving honesty, though at times quite sternly. His deep concern and commitment was to lead souls to Christ for forgiveness and healing.

Sanctified by the Holy Spirit. The last phrase of Romans 15:16 translates literally: "Having been sanctified by the Holy Spirit." Paul desired the Gentiles for whom he ministered to enjoy the blessings of sanctification. In the New Testament the verb *to sanctify* often refers to an experience of holiness in Christ enjoyed by believers now. (See Acts 26:18; 1 Cor. 1:2; 6:11; Heb. 10:10.) The verb *to sanctify* also refers to growth in holiness in Christ. (See 1 Thess. 3:12, 13; 4:1-3; compare 2 Cor. 3:18, 2 Peter 3:18.)

Oneness with God. "No man receives holiness as a birthright, or as a gift from any other human being. Holiness is the gift of God through Christ. Those who receive the Saviour become sons of God. They are His spiritual children, born again, renewed in righteousness and true holiness. Their minds are changed. . . .

"Sanctification is a state of holiness, without and within, being holy and without reserve the Lord's, not in form, but in truth. . . . There must be a progressive work of triumph over evil, of sympathy with good, a reflection of the character of Jesus. We must walk in the light, which will increase and grow brighter unto the perfect day. This is real, substantial growth, which will finally attain to the full stature of men and women in Jesus Christ. . . .

"Conformity to the likeness of Christ's character, overcoming all sin

and temptation, walking in the fear of God, setting the Lord continually before us, will bring peace and joy on earth, and ensure us pure happiness in heaven.”—*Our High Calling*, p. 214.

3. In what did Paul glory? Rom. 15:17, 18 (compare 1 Cor. 1:31; 2 Cor. 10:17, 18).
-

Paul did not exalt himself. Constantly he reminded the readers of his epistles that his glory and boasting was only in Christ, in what Christ had done, and was doing for and through him.

4. What kind of results did Paul wish to see for his labors? Rom. 15:18, 19.
-

Paul’s concern was not merely for numbers of converts. He expected Christ to change the characters of the people for whom he worked. His concern was that the Gentiles might be “obedient, by word and deed” (Rom. 15:18). Such obedience to the will of Christ is possible only “by the power of the Spirit of God” (Rom. 15:19).

The gift of the Holy Spirit to believers is not for them to experience ecstasy, a flight of emotion. The Spirit sanctifies (2 Thess. 2:13; compare 1 Peter 1:1, 2). His power within the heart of the believer enables obedience in word and deed.

Sanctification only through faith. “The followers of Christ are to become like Him—by the grace of God to form characters in harmony with the principles of His holy law. This is Bible sanctification.

“This work can be accomplished only through faith in Christ, by the power of the indwelling Spirit of God.”—*The Great Controversy*, p. 469.

-  5. What particular kind of ministry did Paul conduct? Rom. 15:19-21.
-

Livingstone, the well known missionary to Africa, once volunteered as a missionary with the London Missionary Society. When he was asked where he would like to go, he said, “Anywhere, so long as it is forward.”

Imitating the Master’s example. “In all their missionary endeavors, Paul and Barnabas sought to follow Christ’s example of willing sacrifice and faithful, earnest labor for souls. Wide-awake, zealous, untiring, they did not consult inclination or personal ease, but with prayerful anxiety and unceasing activity they sowed the seed of truth. And with the sowing of the seed, the apostles were careful to give to all who took their stand for the gospel, practical instruction that was of untold value. This spirit of earnest-

ness and godly fear made upon the minds of the new disciples a lasting impression regarding the importance of the gospel message.”—*The Acts of the Apostles*, p. 186.

How can a genuine burden for souls be gained?

II. PAUL'S PLAN TO VISIT ROME (Rom. 15:22-29).

6. Why was Paul's plan to visit Rome delayed? Where did he plan to evangelize after visiting Rome? Rom. 15:22-24 (compare verse 28).

Paul depended heavily on the hospitality of the believers for whom he worked. It was customary for the churches of his day to provide food and shelter for visiting evangelists and to take care of their traveling expenses.

7. Why was it a duty and a privilege for the churches of Macedonia and Greece to send financial relief to the believers in Palestine? Rom. 15:25-27.

An exchange of gifts. Paul points out that “they were pleased to do it” (Rom. 15:27, RSV). He added that it was an obligation, based on love. This was an exchange of gifts. The Jewish Christians were willing and happy to share their Messiah with their Gentile brethren and sisters. Therefore, Paul reasoned, the Gentiles have an obligation and privilege of sharing their material blessings with the needy Jewish Christians (Rom. 15:27).

Paul expected to come to Rome as soon as he had completed his ministry to his people (Rom. 15:28, 29).

Why does the Lord request each one of us to provide financial support for the proclamation of the gospel in the home country and in the mission field?

III. PRAYER REQUESTS (Rom. 15:30-33).

Paul's experience at Jerusalem. “Little did Paul know at this point of all the setbacks he would experience in Jerusalem: arrest, rescue by the Roman soldiers, appearance before the Sanhedrin [Council or Parliament] of the Jews, escape from a plot of over forty men to kill him, a military escort to Caesarea, two years of prison there, and finally the famous shipwreck journey to Rome as a prisoner of the Romans. Nor does Acts reveal anything of the years of Paul after AD 63. The only clues we have are in the so-called pastoral epistles where Paul's circumstances and attitudes are altogether different from those in his first imprisonment when he wrote Colossians, Philemon, Ephesians and Philippians.”—J. C. Wenger, *A Lay Guide to Romans* (Scottsdale, Penn.: Herald Press, 1983), pp. 135, 136.

8. What was Paul's attitude to the effectiveness of corporate and

private prayer? Rom. 15:30 (compare Phil. 1:19; Col. 4:12).

God did not answer the specific requests, for which Paul asked the Roman Christians to pray, in just the way he wished. (See Acts 21:27-35.) Nevertheless their prayers were answered in a manner that the Lord deemed best for Paul's ministry and their spiritual development.

The power of prayer. "Through faith, every deficiency of character may be supplied, every defilement cleansed, every fault corrected, every excellence developed.

"Prayer is heaven's ordained means of success in the conflict with sin and the development of Christian character. The divine influences that come in answer to the prayer of faith will accomplish in the soul of the suppliant all for which he pleads.

"For the pardon of sin, for the Holy Spirit, for a Christlike temper, for wisdom and strength to do His work, for any gift He has promised, we may ask; and the promise is, 'Ye shall receive.'"—*The Acts of the Apostles*, p. 564.

9. List Paul's four prayer requests outlined in Romans 15:31, 32.

- a. _____
- b. _____
- c. _____
- d. _____

In your work for others, what significant answers to prayer have you had?

WED **IV. PERSONAL GREETINGS (Rom. 16:1-16).**

- 10. In view of the many names mentioned in chapter 16 why do you think Paul refers to Phoebe first? Was she a member of the church at Rome? What credentials did she hold? Rom. 16:1, 2.**
-

Phoebe was a "deaconess," a servant or minister in the Christian church at Cenchrea, the eastern seaport of Corinth.

The Greek words used in Romans 16:2 suggest that she may have had some legal business in Rome with which the Roman Christians could be of some help. Because she had been such a blessing to others, Paul felt that, in turn, her fellow Christians could be of service to her.

- 11. What special ties existed between Paul and Aquila and Priscilla? Rom 16:3, 4 (compare Acts 18:1-3; 2 Tim. 4:19).**

12. How many of the people to whom Paul sent greetings were women? Rom. 16:3, 6, 7, 12, 15.
-

The services of women were vital to the progress of the Christian church from the beginning. Faithful women ministered to Jesus (Mark 15:40, 41). The good works of Dorcas will be an example to believers to the end of time (Acts 9:36, 39). Paul referred to women who "labored side by side with me in the gospel" (Phil. 4:3). Phoebe, the deaconess, had been a great blessing to Paul and the church in Cenchrea (Rom. 16:1, 2). The number of women in the church at Rome to whom Paul sent greetings testifies to their importance as Christian workers.

In what ways are the services of women a special blessing to your local church?



V. GLORY TO GOD (Rom. 16:17-27).

13. What methods were used by the troublemakers in the Roman church? How will God deal with the ultimate source of the trouble? Rom. 16:17-20.
-

"A house divided against itself cannot stand. When Christians contend, Satan comes in to take control. How often has he succeeded in destroying the peace and harmony of churches. What fierce controversies, what bitterness, what hatred, has a very little matter started! What hopes have been blasted, how many families have been rent asunder by discord and contention!"—*Testimonies*, vol. 5, p. 244.

14. What is the meaning of the following phrases:

a. "who is able to strengthen you" (Rom. 16:25, RSV). Compare Phil. 4:13; Gal. 3:1-3.

b. "according to the revelation of the mystery" (Rom. 16:25, RSV). Compare 1 Cor. 2:6-10; Col. 1:26, 27.

c. "according to the command of the eternal God" (Rom. 16:26, RSV). Compare Titus 1:3.

"Paul's letter to the Romans ends with one of the great benedictions in biblical literature (16:25-27). It is appropriate that the letter ends with such

a celebration of God's plan of salvation, announced by prophets, fulfilled in Christ, and opened now to all nations, since that is also the way the letter began (1:2-5). Thus framed, the whole of Paul's discussion can be seen within the perspective of God's accomplishing in Christ what he had purposed to do: exercise his redemptive lordship over his rebellious creation and reconcile it unto himself. . . . A benediction to God's completion of his grace-filled plan to heal the breach sin opened between himself and his creatures is thus a most appropriate way to conclude the letter."—Paul J. Achtemeier, *Romans: Interpretation* (Atlanta, Georgia: John Knox Press, 1985), pp. 237, 238.

THE RICHNESS OF PAUL'S SPIRITUAL LIFE. What spiritual characteristics of the apostle Paul revealed in this week's lesson made him so effective in his service for Christ? What is the state of your spiritual life and service for Christ. What are the areas in which you still need to grow? Why not ask the Lord now to give you continuous growth in grace?

FRI

FURTHER STUDY AND MEDITATION: Review the overall message of the book of Romans. It will be helpful to write down the main emphasis of each chapter. Be sure that you understand and experience the spiritual healing of Jesus Christ who makes us right and keeps us right.

SUMMARY: Paul was a true apostle and shepherd of his flock. He cared for the needy by calling for and taking an offering to Jerusalem from the Christians of Greece and Macedonia. He planned to visit the believers at Rome on his missionary journey from Jerusalem to Spain. He appealed to the believers at Rome for special prayer on behalf of his ministry. He greeted many other Christians who were worshipping together. As a conscientious pastor Paul was deeply concerned about those who were causing divisions in the church. He ended his epistle with a grand doxology to God, who is able to establish His people by the gospel of Jesus Christ.



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Lessons for First Quarter, 1991

Sabbath School members who have not received a copy of the Adult Lessons for the first quarter of 1991 will be helped by the following outline in studying the first two lessons. The title of the series is *Crisis, Change, and Challenge*. This quarter's lessons cover the books of 1 and 2 Samuel.

First Lesson: "God Hears the Prayer of Faith"

THIS WEEK'S STUDY: 1 Samuel 1:1—3:21.

MEMORY TEXT: 1 Samuel 3:9

GOD CALLS PEOPLE to follow His purposes and plans. Because they respond in different ways to His plans for them, the outcome of their lives is different. God's way leads to His healing salvation; the way of the evil one leads to destruction.

OUTLINE:

- I. A Mother's Faith (1 Sam. 1:1—2:10).
- II. A Father's Failure (1 Sam. 2:12-17, 22-26).
- III. Samuel's Call (1 Sam. 2:11, 18-20; 3:1-21).

Second Lesson: "Reverence for the Holy"

THIS WEEK'S STUDY: 1 Samuel 4:1—7:14.

MEMORY TEXT: Exodus 29:45, 46.

RESPECT FOR GOD'S PRESENCE. We are blessed as we show love and reverence for God in our homes, our schools, our hospitals, and our churches. Israel and her enemies perverted the use of the visible symbols of the divine Presence and thereby lost the blessing.

OUTLINE:

- I. Israel's Error (1 Sam. 4:1-22).
- II. The Philistine's Offense (1 Sam. 5:1—6:21).
- III. From Defeat to Victory (1 Sam. 7:1-14).

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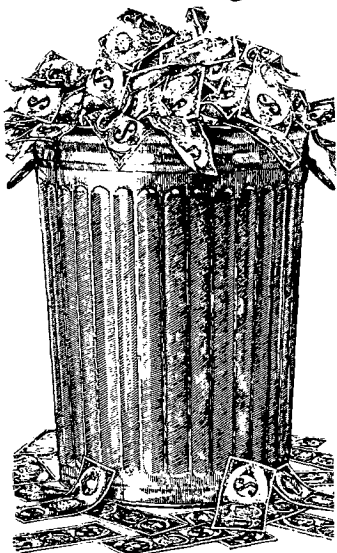
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